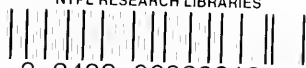


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LECTURES

ON THE

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

DELIVERED IN PHILADELPHIA,

BY CLERGYMEN OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

IN THE FALL AND WINTER OF

1853-4.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY BY

ALONZO POTTER, D.D., LL.D.,

BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

ABOUT a year since, the Editor of this volume, in conjunction with the Rev. Dr. Morton (President of the Standing Committee), and the Rev. Dr. Stevens (Secretary of the Convention of the Diocese of Pennsylvania), projected a Course of Lectures on the Evidences of Religion, to be prepared with special reference to the present exigencies of that subject, and to the wants of young men of cultivated and thoughtful habits. The following *List of Subjects* was proposed :

1. Philosophy of Religion. 2. Philosophical Scepticism (Historical, Critical). 3. Pantheistic Idealism. 4. Materialism (Life, Soul). 5. Spiritualism. 6. Socialism. 7. Relation of the Objective and Subjective Factors in Revelation. 8. Inspiration. 9. Natural and Revealed Religion. 10. Fatalistic Tendency of Modern Science. 11. Revelation confronted with Ethnology. 12. Revelation confronted with Astronomy. 13. Revelation confronted with Archeology. 14. Revelation confronted with Philology. 15. Revelation confronted with Geology. 16. Historical Evidences of Christianity (Character and Value). 17. Internal Evidences of Christianity. 18. Theory of Prophecy

(Structure, Use, Inspiration). 19. Theory of Miracles.
20. Theory of Development (Newman, Schaff).

Invitations to take part in this course, were addressed to a considerable number of the Bishops and Clergy—the names of others being reserved for subsequent Courses. These invitations were accepted by the authors of the following Lectures, and by a few others, of whom some were providentially hindered from fulfilling their engagement; the rest have not found it convenient to prepare their manuscripts in time for this publication. Bishop Elliott gave two Lectures, and Bishops Otey and Potter, the Rev. Doctors Morton, Goodwin, Coit, and T. M. Clark, and the Rev. A. C. Coxe, each delivered one Lecture in addition to those which are contained in the present volume. Some of these it is expected will be published hereafter.

Introduction.

INTRODUCTION.

APOLOGETICS.

THE history of Auguste Comte is instructive. It is now more than a quarter of a century since he appeared in France as the Reformer and Legislator of the Science of the World. His boldness was great, and yet it was hardly greater than his genius. Though long neglected by the *savans* of his own country, and hardly known abroad, he has gradually won a proud position among the thinkers of our time, and in some respects he has vindicated his claim to a place above them all.

But he was far from happy in choosing the first principles of his Philosophy. They belonged to the narrowest and coldest of the systems which have been erected on the basis of Locke. He assumed the entire incompetency of the human mind to penetrate beyond the relative and phenomenal, and excluded Metaphysics and Theology from the sphere of human science, in a tone so peremptory and contemptuous, that nothing but the transcendent ability with which he wrote could have saved him from instant banishment from the pale of philosophy. On this contracted basis he

has toiled, with titanic strength and patience, to rear a complete system of Science, now commonly known as *Positivism*. The *Cours de Philosophie Positive* commenced the series of his publications more than twenty years ago; the *Cours de Politique Positive*, not yet completed, forms the last of his contributions to Philosophy that we have seen. In France, M. Letré has been the popular expounder of his doctrines. In England, that office has been assumed by Miss Harriet Martineau, and by Mr. Lewes.

In comparing his last with his first work, it becomes manifest that an essential change has come over the spirit of his speculations. He has had experiences, which demonstrate how impotent a mere theory may become when it stands face to face with the great moral facts and sentiments of our existence. M. Comte, as he more than once tells us, was inspired with a passionate attachment for Madame Clotilde de Vaux, who died in 1846. That attachment taught him that "sentiment" as well as intellect was entitled to a place in the domain of reasoning, and her death, with other personal causes, and with despair of regenerating society through mere science alone, seems to have induced at last the conviction that Religion of some kind was the indispensable condition of attaining to a truly normal state. Hence, after rejecting that Religion, at the outset of his career, as a mere dream of humanity in its childhood, we find him towards its close re-constituting it (in a shape indeed most absurd and fantastic), as one of the great ideas of the soul and as one of the necessary constituents of the highest condition of society.

A fact like this needs no comment. It teaches, more impressively than volumes, what man needs in the moral crises of his being, and it demonstrates that a merely speculative philosophy is not the safest foundation for a science

which would comprehend all the facts and necessities of humanity.

The same truth is taught most significantly by the speculations of Kant, who ranks second to no modern as a profound philosophical thinker, and who proposed, in his *Critic of the Reason*, to ascertain the entire resources of the human mind. He came to the conclusion that we possess no faculty capable of reaching outward reality,* and at the end of his critical examination of the *Pure Reason*, found directly before him "the yawning abyss of an absolute subjectivity."† From this his vigorous and earnest soul recoiled. Hence, in his Critique of the *Practical Reason*, the result of maturer contemplations, he builds his theory on those same necessary convictions of mankind which he had previously rejected. He insists on the moral exigencies of humanity, and finds in them a guarantee for the objective validity of those grand ideas,—God, Immortality, Recompense,—which the speculative reason, according to him, does, indeed, project, but cannot legitimate. In this reaction from speculative idealism towards a *quasi* mysticism, Kant exhibits in his own career one of the leading characteristics of speculative philosophy,—the history of which is little more than a history of vibrations

* We ought, perhaps, to except the existence of the external world; but Sir Wm. Hamilton well observes, "The proof of its reality which Kant attempted (independently of the necessary belief of mankind), is now admitted by one and all of his disciples to be so inconsequent, that it may be reasonably doubted whether he ever intended it for more than an exoteric disclaimer of the esoteric idealism of his doctrine. But the philosopher who deemed it a scandal to philosophy and human reason to found the proof of a material world—in itself to us a matter of supreme indifference on belief;—on belief, on feeling, afterwards established the proof of all the highest objects of our interest—God, Free Will, and Immortality."—*Notes on Reid*, p. 792, 2d ed. 1849.

† Jacobi.

between the extremes of sensualism or idealism on one side, and those of scepticism or mysticism on the other.

These remarks will prepare us for a distinction which we conceive to be all-important in discussing the subject of Apologetics, or the *Evidences of Religion*. There are two points of view from which the whole subject of Evidence must be considered, if we would understand properly the entire scope of its principles and relations. The one is *practical*, the other is purely *speculative*, or *theoretical*. The latter belongs to *science*; the former to *life*.

We shall accordingly offer some remarks upon what, for the sake of convenience, we may designate as the *Practical and Speculative Problems* pertaining to the whole matter of belief and scepticism, and we shall then suggest a few considerations bearing more immediately upon *Religious Scepticism*, and especially upon the religious scepticism of our own day.

1. *The Practical Problem.*

When we come to act, we all necessarily proceed upon the supposition that there is such a thing as truth, and that this truth can be so ascertained, as to justify and imperatively require, on our part, a corresponding conduct. The evidence on which we proceed rarely amounts to demonstration in the proper sense of that term. It amounts only to a *probability*, which varies in different degrees from the highest moral certainty to the lowest presumption.

On such probabilities, all men, whether peasants or philosophers, are accustomed to act with spontaneous and unhesitating alacrity. "Nature," says Pascal, "confounds the Pyrrhonist." In other words, the absolute sceptic, who on speculative grounds holds that there is no certainty, is a sceptic only in theory. Neither Hume, Bayle, Ænesede-

mus, nor Pyrrho, ever pretended to incorporate their speculative doubts into their daily life. If wronged, they went like other men to the law for redress, nor did they ever question that the principles of Evidence, which were applied in ascertaining the reality and extent of their wrongs, were founded in truth and reason.

The Practical Problem presented by Apologetics is this : *can the Christian's faith be vindicated on those principles of Evidence, which in respect to this life men accept and act upon without distrust or hesitation?* It is the province of Apologetics, as a branch of Practical Philosophy, to maintain the affirmation of this question.

The weight which is to be attached to testimony, oral or circumstantial, is a question with which we constantly deal ; and the criteria which ought to determine our judgment have been developed, especially in connexion with Practical Jurisprudence—with a fulness and precision which leaves us little to ask. In respect to the signs that foreshadow coming events, and those that point to the operation of certain causes and powers, we have also rules of judging on which we act without hesitation. Thus we are supplied with *principles of evidence* or *tests of truth*, the use and application of which form no small part of our moral education. They are evidently intended to regulate not only our opinions, but yet more our practice. In enabling us to pronounce on the probability of any statement that pertains to the present, the past, or the future, they make it our duty to recognise the influence which that statement ought to exercise now and hereafter upon our actions.

This holds in respect to every subject that can by possibility involve our duty or welfare. If the historical statements, for example, which we find in the Bible will bear the various tests of credibility laid down by such writers as Starkie and Phillips on the *Law of Evidence*, then they be-

come at once entitled to our acceptance. If the Gospel of John has every mark of veracity which can be found in the Annals of Tacitus and more besides, then he who receives the latter has already concluded himself against rejecting the other. He convicts himself of flagrant inconsistency if he adopt, and then at pleasure repudiate the same criteria of judging: if at one moment he rest on these criteria as unquestionable and important, and at the next moment—because a subject presents itself which he happens not to relish—treat them with neglect or disdain.

So in regard to the testimony yielded by our own souls to the moral contents of Scripture, and the attestations supplied by these souls, and by the world without, to the existence of God, to Immortality, and Retribution. Did such attestations have respect only to an impending and eventful trial in this life, which is fast approaching, no sane man would deny that they ought to command our instant and profound consideration. In respect to interests that press upon our senses, that are urged upon our notice by the counsel and example of all men, we spontaneously yield, not merely our judgment, but our conduct to the influence of these laws of evidence. But it is part of our trial as candidates for a higher life, that we are able to overlook and disregard objects in proportion as they recede from our grosser perceptions or belong to a remoter future. And does it not convict us of being under some sore delusion, in respect to “heavenly things,” that where *they* are concerned we can coolly reject, or accepting, can calmly and habitually disregard, the very same principles which in respect to “earthly things” we constantly and heartily act upon?

Apologetics deal mainly with those who profess to disbelieve; the pulpit and the religious press, in their practical lessons, deal with those who, believing in name, still live

for the most part as if they believed not. The evidences of Religion, as usually taught, rest their appeals mainly on the *argumentum ad hominem*. They do not enter into metaphysical speculations respecting the validity of all knowledge, and respecting the nature of the religious principle in man. They simply labour to bring the great Christian verities into the same general category with beliefs on which we are all content and glad to rest every day. The difficulties in the way of the Christian faith are shown to be of the same kind with those that attach to many of the convictions and presumptions that we are compelled to proceed upon in "the life that now is."* The positive proofs in the shape of historic evidence,—the attestations given by our own hearts to the truths of Natural Religion, the inward witness of the soul to the words of Christ as words of soberness and Divine truth,—the monumental confirmations that speak to us from mouldering ruins, from hoary traditions, from institutions and ordinances and commemorative observances, coeval with the very infancy of our faith,—these together form a majestic and solid mass of evidence before which, in respect to "things seen," the hardiest scepticism would shrink back. The grounds on which Strauss would invalidate the Gospel History must, if properly extended, prove fatal ultimately to all historical documents whatever.

Thus then stands the case, when considered in the only light which is really important—the light of interest and duty. Men, even those least prone to credulity, or most inclined to scepticism, constantly treat as incontestable, evidence which is vastly less clear and cogent than that which

* These difficulties are also met by showing that they are vastly less formidable than those which must be encountered if we resort to unbelief.—See *Fuber on the Difficulties of Infidelity*.

authenticates the Christian Revelation. As a matter which comes home to "men's business and bosoms" it is, as Butler has said, "FULLY SUFFICIENT FOR ALL THE PURPOSES OF PROBATION," "purposes which it answers (he adds) in several respects, which it would not do, if it were as overbearing as is desired."* To make it more overbearing might not be consistent with a proper degree of freedom in man's will; it clearly would not be consistent with a proper culture through the intellect of his heart and his conscience. Faith, to be a true and ennobling power, must be compounded of acts, which are moral as well as intellectual; it must be grown to some extent as the fruit of conflict between opposing probabilities and between the lower and higher principles of our nature. Religious faith, above all needs, the development which comes only through discipline and trial. And hence the wisdom of the following admirable hints from the same source. Though we have not faculties to distinguish different degrees of evidence with perfect exactness, "yet," Butler urges, "in proportion as they are discerned they ought to influence our practice. *For it is as real an imperfection in the moral character not to be influenced in practice by a lower degree of evidence when discerned, as it is in the understanding not to discern it.* And as in all subjects which men consider, they discern the lower as well as higher degrees of it proportionably to their fairness and honesty, and as in proportion to defects in the understanding men are unapt to see lower degrees of evidence, are in danger of overlooking evidence when it is not glaring, and are easily imposed upon in such cases—so in proportion to the corruption of the heart they seem capable of satisfying themselves with having no regard in practice to evidence acknowledged real, if it be not overbearing. From these things it must follow that doubting concerning religion

* Analogy, part II., ch. 7.

implies such a degree of evidence for it, as, joined with the consideration of its importance, unquestionably lays men under the obligations before mentioned, to have a dutiful regard for it in all their behaviour.*

“Persons who speak of the Evidence of Religion as doubtful (Butler says again, in another place), and of this supposed doubtfulness, as a positive argument against it, should be put upon considering what that evidence indeed is which they act upon with regard to their temporal interests. For it is not only extremely difficult, but in many cases absolutely impossible, to balance pleasure and pain, satisfaction and uneasiness, so as to be able to say on which side the overplus is. There are the like difficulties and impossibilities in making the due allowances for a change of temper and taste, for satiety, disgusts, ill health—any of which render men incapable of enjoying, after they have obtained what they most eagerly desired. Numberless, too, are the accidents, besides that one of untimely death, which may even probably disappoint the best concerted schemes, and strong objections are often seen to lie against them not to be removed or answered, but which seem overbalanced by reasons on the other side, so as that the certain difficulties and dangers of the pursuit are by every one thought justly disregarded, upon account of the appearing greater advantages in case of success, though there be but little probability of it. Lastly, every one observes our liableness, if we be not upon our guard, to be deceived by the falsehood of men, and the false appearance of things; and this danger must be greatly increased if there be a strong bias within, suppose from indulged passion, to favour the deceit. Hence arises that great uncertainty and doubtfulness of proof, wherein our temporal interest really consists, what are the most probable means of attaining it, and whether

* Butler's Analogy, p. 270.

those means will be eventually successful. And numberless instances there are in the daily course of life *in which all men think it reasonable to engage in pursuits, though the probability is greatly against succeeding, and to make such provision for themselves as it is supposable they may have occasion for, though the plain acknowledged probability is that they never shall.*"*

To these passages, so well calculated to provoke thought, let us add one more from a contemporary and correspondent of Butler (Dr. Samuel Clarke): "Were there hardly any other evidence at all than barely the excellency and reasonableness of the great truths of religion, together with the consideration of the vast importance of them, yet even *in that case* it would be infinitely wisest and most agreeable to reason for men to live according to the rules of the Gospel. And though their faith extended no further than only to a belief of the *possibility* of the truth of the Christian revelation; yet even this alone ought in all reason to have weight enough to determine reasonable creatures to live *soberly, righteously, and godly*. *For is it not plainly most reasonable*, as an ancient writer† expresses it, 'if each of the opposite opinions were equally doubtful and uncertain, yet by all means to embrace that which brings some hope along with it, rather than that which brings none. For on one side of the question there is no danger at all of incurring any calamity, if that which we believe and expect should at last prove false; but on the other side, there is the greatest hazard in the world of the loss of eternal life, if the opinion which unbelievers rely upon should at last prove an error. And again, what say ye, O ye ignorant men! ye men of miserable and most deplorable folly! can ye forbear fearing within your hearts, that at least these things may possibly prove true which ye now

* Analogy, part II., ch. 6.

† Arnobius.

despise and mock at? Have ye not at least some misgivings of mind, lest possibly that which ye now perversely and obstinately refuse to believe, ye should at last be convinced, by sad experience, when it will be too late to repent?" Nor is this the judgment of Christian writers only, but also of the wisest and most considerate heathens. 'We ought to spare no pains,' saith Plato, 'to obtain the habits of virtue and wisdom in this present life. For the prize is noble, and the hope is very great.' And Cicero—"They have gained a great prize, indeed, who have persuaded themselves to believe that when death comes, they shall perish utterly. What comfort is there; what is there to be boasted of in that opinion?" And again: 'If after death,' saith he, 'as some little and contemptible philosophers think, I shall be nothing, yet there is no danger that when we are all dead, those philosophers shall laugh at me for my error.' "§

In tracing the history of Apologetics, we find that it has been generally discussed as a practical question. Objections have been made, doubts insinuated; and the friends of Christianity have come forward to repel them, and to show that the difficulties which embarrass Faith are insignificant when compared with those which encompass Infidelity. In its early infancy, the doctrine of Christ and Him crucified was foolishness to one party, and a stumbling-block to another. Yet it was preached, and that preaching vindicated itself by arguments addressed to the understanding as well as by miraculous demonstrations from Heaven. He who spake with a Divine authority and power, spake also with a logic so close and pungent that it often sent away his adversaries covered with shame. So he who in his preaching renounced all dependence on "enticing words of man's wisdom" va-

§ Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, p. 454. Lond. 1738.

liantly faced every objector on his own ground, and instead of simply dogmatizing, confounded both Jews and Greeks, *proving that Jesus was the very Christ*. In his steps trod Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Arnobius, and the other early Apologists of the Church. They met Judaism and Paganism face to face, confiding in the power of truth properly presented to vanquish, under God, the stoutest unbelief. Their arguments were not such as we learn by rote in schools of Theology, or from bodies of Divinity: arguments which we reproduce with little reference to the special wants of those around us. They were such as can be evolved only by deep reflection on the pressure of sore emergencies, from the depths of souls rich in Divine and human love, and burning with an intense zeal for God and his truth. And these trials of our faith, these onsets of a captious and unrelenting criticism—coupled often with a bloody persecution, have been rich in blessing to our faith. They have put to flight a dead and arrogant dogmatism. They have compelled polemics to hunt up their best weapons, long perhaps disused, and to lay aside all that are of doubtful temper. They have stimulated research in every branch of knowledge that can by any possibility cast new light on the claims of the Gospel, and they thus add from age to age new materials to the stupendous mass of evidence which testifies in favour of Jesus of Nazareth. In this way the enemies of Religion often do it a service more essential than can be rendered to it by its friends.

Christianity is a Religion which courts inquiry. It insists, as was never done before, on an “honest and sincere heart,” as the condition precedent of all proper appreciation of its nature and all effectual reception of its spirit and power. But at the same time it also insists upon its right to consideration and obedience, on the single ground of its objective proofs—proofs which are fitted to convince even

the most unspiritual, if they only give them heed. It has arguments adapted to every variety of capacity, temperament, and culture. And there is the crowning argument of all, which is supplied by the lives of its disciples, and which grows stronger just in proportion as we most need it. "By their fruits shall ye know them," is the test of tests for a principle or a system of doctrine, and never has our faith emerged so triumphantly from the application of this test as in her times of fiercest trial. Her power to conquer foes and extend her sway over ignorance and sin, her ability to convince gainsayers and win over scoffing scepticism, have never shone out so brightly as when, to human eye, all things seemed to be against her. Then it is that her people, purged of earthly passion, and inspired with a divine enthusiasm, mount up as on eagles' wings, to a more than earthly virtue. And then, if ever, our faith might renounce all dependence on dialectics, while it demonstrates on the open arena of toil and travail, the celestial spirit it breathes, and the superhuman energy with which it is endowed. Yet even at such seasons, Christianity is still ready to give reasons for the hope that is in her. Even then her sons argue, while they suffer, and at no periods in the history of the Church have they done it more acutely or profoundly than when they had in full view the fagot and the stake.

The days on which we have fallen are not days of persecution. They are days of ease; and therefore days of languid faith. Even among those who profess Christ, religious service, whether in the sanctuary, or in the duties and charities of daily life, is sadly marred by a spirit of epicurean self-indulgence. The robust and lofty zeal which loves to encounter foes, and is prodigal of self-sacrifice, is now replaced too often, by a sordid spirit, which shuns hardship, and cares only to escape perdition at last. On

the other hand, among those who decline submission to the word of Christ, many of the amenities and graces of the Christian character are affected. Many too, who as Deists or avowed Sceptics, would have poured coarse ridicule and invective on the doctrines of the Cross in a former age, now profess and call themselves Christians. They cannot away with its distinguishing doctrines, but they honour the morality of the New Testament—they are willing to uphold the religion of their country, and they condescendingly admit, that when properly retrenched and amended by the aid of their spiritual insight, the Gospels afford the best *Republication of Natural Theology*, the nearest approach to the one *absolute religion* that the world has seen. This spurious Christianity naturally amalgamates with the cultivation of letters and the progress of science. Suavity and delicacy of thought are recommended. Profligacy is represented as losing all its deformity when it loses half its grossness. The individual conscience is put forward as supreme arbiter of all our conduct, and the instinctive impulses of the soul as carrying with them a sufficient pledge of their own lawfulness. Measuring all things by itself, the mind is given over to self-laudation and self-idolatry. Every declaration of God is to be examined by the finite measure of our understanding. Rationalism is substituted for faith, and just so much of religious sentiment retained, as the mind of man can comprehend and the natural heart approve.

What is to be expected of such a Christianity? “While the gentle gale breathes sweetly, and the bright sun shines, none of the monsters of the deep will rise to view. So long as these shadows of Christian virtue continue the world’s favourites, this substitute for our faith will retain its character of decorum and amiability, but no longer. Let sensuality command profit or applause, the gifted poet be-

comes the willing pander to the lowest appetites of human nature. Is the established order of civil subjection condemned by the opinion of the world? The philosopher will serenely assist in delivering up to slaughter those who refuse to join the ranks of anarchy. Is the Church or the cloister stigmatized by the multitude as the stronghold of superstition? Those who frequent them will be surrendered to violence even by the advocates of a high civilization with as little remorse as the Inquisition once immolated the heretic. No form of faith branded as hostile to human progress by these 'friends of light' will escape the utmost extremity of hatred and persecution if it shall dare to be loyal to its convictions."*

It becomes the guardians of truth then, to be on the alert. They will be cajoled if possible---into a surrender of the only part of Religion† which is worth contending for. They will be urged and entreated to accept the sophistries of earthly wisdom, as an adequate compromise; to seek toleration for Christianity as a favour from enlightened unbelief; to purchase a truce, at any price, from those who despise the law of the Lord. Let none of those things move them. Their province in these days is to stand fast by the old land-marks. Are the noblest bulwarks of our Faith assailed? even belief

* Sir Francis Palgrave, altered.

† Lessing, the poet and philosopher, though a religious septic, thus speaks of Neologists:

"A botch-work of smatterings and half-philosophy is that system of religion which people now want to set up in the place of the old one; and with far more invasion upon reason and philosophy than the old one ever pretended. If Christ is not the *True God*, the Mahommedan religion is indisputably far better than the Christian, and Mahommed himself was incomparably a greater and more honourable man than Jesus Christ; for he was more truth-telling, more circumspect in what he said, and more zealous for the honour of the one and only God, than Christ was, who, if he did not exactly give himself out for God, yet at least said a hundred two-meaning things to lead simple people to think so; while Mahommed could never be charged with a single instance of double-dealing in this way."

in the Divine Personality, in a Sovereign and all perfect Will—in the Supernatural, as the great element in Miracle, Prophecy, and Providence—in the Gospel, as a medicine for diseased and all but dead humanity—in the mission of the Comforter, and in the regeneration which he, through Christ's truth, works in our poor souls and bodies—are these the great fundamentals of our Faith assailed? Let those who have been set for the defence of the Gospel see to it that they are not wanting. These grand verities must be intensified with a new life in our own souls. They must be evolved with new clearness and force on the consciousness of others. That we may feel and comprehend more adequately the glory that there is in Christ's Cross, we must study it more profoundly, look to it more earnestly and confidently as our souls' only hope, and pray without ceasing that through it the world may be crucified unto us and we unto the world.

We see reason, then, why the evidences of religion should from time to time be examined anew. The whole question between faith and unbelief needs to be re-argued now as a momentous issue that belongs to life, and to the most urgent wants of mankind. The world is full of sophists, like those who provoked the chastisement of Socrates. It contains many, too, who are astray only through perplexity, and who yearn for emancipation from the pangs of suspense and incertitude. That relief the Church is bound to afford to the utmost of her ability. She is not, of course, to suffer discussions of the evidences to supersede her grand mission, as the bearer of overtures of pardon and grace from her Divine Lord; as the expounder of an all-comprehending morality, which is summed up in that best of words, *Love*; as the advocate for an unreserved surrender to Christ of all our faculties—soul, body, and spirit. But she is to show her credentials. She is to instruct those,

who believe, also, in the nature and value of those credentials. Laymen, not less than clergymen, need this instruction. It is their duty, no less than ours, to be ever ready to give, to all who ask or need it, a reason for their faith. They, besides, have opportunities for discovering the existence of doubts and difficulties among unbelievers which no clergyman can enjoy. They meet—as he cannot—the multitudes who are tempted by the strange pretensions and monstrous absurdities, which are abroad in this age of intellectual and moral chaos. At such a time the faith of many is insensibly shaken; and we must make our election between the forecast which anticipates, and to the utmost of its power prevents apostasies, and the tardy and expensive zeal which devotes itself to the much harder work of reclaiming them. No man can number those whom a word in season, from well instructed and earnest lips—whether spoken publicly or from house to house—might have saved from the greatest and most perilous of defections.

It is not only, however, as we have already intimated, from monstrous delusions or impious self-conceits, that our faith is in danger. It suffers also from those who think themselves its friends. Errors in philosophy, which involve the very corner-stone of a true Christian theism, are embraced unconsciously by many who honestly love the purity and world-wide humanity of the Gospel. More than once, within the enclosure of the Church, and in discussions among churchmen, has a virtual Pantheism crept in. It was so in the case of John Scotus Erigena (9th century), who has been compared to a sphynx, stationed at the threshold of the Middle Ages. It was so again with the ideal pantheism of De Chartres (13th century), and a little later with the material pantheism of his disciple, David de Dinant. It is so now. This philosophy, so fatal to all active piety and virtue, has infected not a little of our

science. It has insinuated itself still more widely through our literature. Who can turn from Cowper or Milton to some of the most gifted seers of our own time, and not see that in respect to the great issues between Theism and Pantheism, Freedom and Fatalism, Materialism and Immaterialism, Redemption and Development, their position is too often equivocal? It is not so much that they are open, flagrant errorists, as that their conceptions of the beautiful and good are often materially tinged, and sometimes wholly interpenetrated, by speculations which substitute abstractions for persons, and cloudy dreams of a spontaneous virtue for a stern and holy sense of duty and responsibility.

But now, as always, Christianity has most to fear from those whose orthodoxy is unquestionable. Its authorized or self-constituted champions inflict the deepest wounds—for those wounds are inflicted in the house of its friends. Open enemies it can overpower, or defy—but treacherous watchmen surrender its strongholds, and leave it no hope but in God. As treason, in one who has proclaimed himself a patriot, makes patriotism itself suspected, so recreancy in life or manners, on the part of those who have been put in trust of the Gospel, causes the very Gospel itself to be scorned and profaned. Hardly less mischief is sometimes done through misjudgment, and a reckless defence. When any cause is upheld by fallacious arguments, or incorrect statements, we are not to wonder that the fault should be attributed, not to the incompetency of the advocate, but to the essential weakness of the position he holds. Much of the same evil results from violence or insolence in debate, on the part of those, who profess principles which ought to soften the asperity and rebuke the arrogance of the natural heart. When they can so far forget the proprieties of debate as to substitute coarse personalities for calm and weighty argument, the conclusion is drawn unjustly, but

naturally, not that they are mere pretenders to an influence which is real and most benign, but that the influence itself is a chimera. Against such an inference, so injurious, and often so fatal, the Gospel ought to be protected. They who are looked to as its special expounders and guardians, cannot overrate the importance of recommending it by a life beyond reproach, and by arguments that may defy scrutiny. This is always necessary—it is rarely more so than now. Those who hold essential error in our time, are often distinguished by elegant accomplishments and by exemplary lives. They devote themselves to works of charity. They win respect by amiable manners and rational tastes; they compass sea and land to augment the treasures of science, and swell the triumphs of civilization. Let it not be said that with all their unbelief, they merit more esteem than the defenders of the faith, or that their learning or their logic is more than a match for ours who are under vows the most solemn, to be ready “with all faithful diligence” “by doctrine and by life” to refute all erroneous and strange teaching contrary to God’s word.

2. *The Speculative Problem.*

In turning from Apologetics as a branch of Practical Divinity, to its place in a system of Scientific or Speculative Theology, we encounter at once some of the profoundest difficulties in Metaphysical Philosophy. Whether there is a proper scientific basis for any of our knowledge, or whether, in its first principles, it be not essentially empirical; whether our subjective impressions are in any case a rigorous guarantee for our objective beliefs; whether our faith, for example, in the existence of the external world is capable of being vindicated by an indisputable logic, and if so, in what way; these are questions which have divided philosophers almost from the time that abstract speculation

first began. If such questions have been mooted in respect to material and visible objects, we need not wonder that they have been urged still more in respect to invisible realities; such as Beauty, Goodness, Immortality, and God. The first principles of Ethics, Æsthetics, and Religion, stand on nearly the same ground as the primary questions touching our own existence and the existence of the world without. Let the ultimate reason be stated for believing that the book which seems to be lying before me is more than a phantasm, that it has objective reality, and a position, form, and size, such as my senses indicate;—let the ground of this belief, I say, be stated formally by any school in philosophy, and there are other schools ready to contest that ground. One class of thinkers propose to raise the whole fabric of human science upon the basis of rigorous demonstration, thus giving to physical, psychological, ethical, and theological beliefs, the same character as that which belongs to mathematical truths. Another class appeal for the first principles of all knowledge, whether it pertain to things material or things spiritual, to primordial conceptions and intuitive beliefs, which are to be assumed as above question and incapable of demonstration. A third undertake to evolve these conceptions and beliefs, by a process of extended reasoning from a few simple facts given in sensation and experience.

The difference here is not in respect to the *practical* regard which should be given to the various beliefs, which are all but universal among men, but in respect to their origin and scientific value. All admit that he would be a madman, who should proceed in his daily conduct on the principles of absolute scepticism; who should meet every emergency and every incident with a negation or a doubt. The main controversy respects the method of laying, for that which we are to assume as true, a proper

scientific foundation; and we ought to anticipate that, in proportion as questions withdraw themselves from the sphere of our senses and of our grosser necessities, they will become, in the same proportion, the battle-ground of these disputes. They are controversies not likely to terminate soon. An absolute criterion of certitude, if found at all, must evidently be found in the constitution of the human mind; but the science (psychology) which undertakes to unfold that constitution, is still immature. So long as this continues to be the case, we must reconcile ourselves to the same imperfections in the theory or Philosophy of Religion which we find in the theories of *Æsthetics*, *Ethics*, or *Politics*. The first truths and fundamental notions which pertain to each, will still vindicate their power over all minds, though the extent to which ideas thus held implicitly by all will be developed and formally maintained, must greatly vary. The genesis and scientific value of these fundamental truths and notions, will still be a fruitful subject of discussion among those who claim to be philosophical thinkers; and in such discussions the sceptical mind finds abundant food for doubt and disbelief. The strife of pens and tongues which has been renewed from age to age, often with no conclusive result, is appealed to as evidence that all search for a true philosophy must be fruitless. The assurance too, with which dogmatism puts forth her bold assumptions, and the intolerance with which she pursues those who presume to question them, is another ground, to some minds, of hopeless incertitude. Add to these the absurd and perhaps monstrous consequences which can be shown to be embedded in various doctrines and systems, and we need not wonder that minds which depend only on logic, and value subtlety of reasoning more than common sense, come at length to have no *speculative* faith. They turn in disgust from all philosophy except as the subject of a

relentless criticism, and denounce the very foundation on which it rests, as sand. We are to act in respect to life here, indeed, as if our subjective impressions had objective counterparts; but we are to expect no rigorous and scientific guarantee for the procedure. This is *Speculative* or *Philosophical Scepticism*.

It is to be carefully distinguished from *Religious Scepticism*. The latter does not necessarily reject the grounds on which our other knowledge rests. It may merely disallow the evidence which is claimed sometimes for Revelation, sometimes for Natural Religion merely, and sometimes for both. The Religious Sceptic may unite with the vast majority of mankind in accepting, on other subjects, the evidence of the senses, of testimony, or of reasoning; and he may hold that in doing so he is open to no assault on speculative more than on practical grounds. The Philosophical Sceptic occupies a wholly different position. On the question of the validity of all human knowledge he boldly takes the negative, and he contends that our only hope of rest is to be found in abjuring all philosophy; if not in renouncing, so far as we may, all faith. We are to surrender ourselves to current beliefs which are perhaps irrepressible, but we are to hold that on no subjects are they necessarily more than illusions; while, in matters pertaining to the spiritual world, they are least of all entitled to claim a valid science for their support. Such a state of mind impeaches its own capacity and the capacity of all men, to think and reason with any reliable accuracy. It even sweeps away every foundation on which it undertakes to erect its own pyrrhonism; for, in reaching that pyrrhonism, it passes through a process of reasoning each step of which, on its own principles, must be worthless, and yet each one must be accepted, if it would give force or value to the conclusion in which it professes to find repose.

When held, therefore, in an *absolute* form, Philosophical Scepticism stultifies itself, while it offers to the deepest convictions and aspirations of the soul a ruthless violence.

Hence it is that, instead of the *absolute*, it generally takes the *relative* form. It assumes the principles of some reigning philosophy to be the best which the mind of man can reach, and then, by a process analogous to the *reductio ad absurdum*, shows that these principles mutually destroy each other. In proportion as such philosophy is universally received, whatever is fatal to it seems to be fatal to all speculative thinking, and thus leaves the mind a prey to profound distrust. In this state it sometimes takes refuge, as we shall see hereafter, in supernatural aid; sometimes abandons itself to indifference or despair. More frequently, however, the hostility of the Sceptic aims not so much at the disparagement of all truths, as at the discrediting of some particular system, then in the ascendant. Is it one which ascribes to the senses a too exclusive agency in originating our knowledge, he aims to demonstrate its narrowness and insufficiency. Is it one which aims to trace that knowledge almost altogether to intuitional processes, he pursues it with the same unsparing criticism. If this criticism aims not merely to destroy error but also to build up truth, it may result in substituting for one philosophy its opposite, or in replacing both with a system of greater comprehensiveness. But if, on the other hand, the leading aim be destructive, the result will be a state of suspense,—mainly in respect to the system assailed, but partially also in respect to all philosophic inquiry.

The writer then stands in such a position, that those who read may doubt, and he himself may not know, whether he does really hold the cheerless creed of the sceptic. Thus it is questioned whether, even in a speculative sense, Hume was more than a relative sceptic. He had assumed the

Representative theory of Perception as the best and only one that philosophy could furnish. In deducing from it sceptical conclusions, it may merely have been his object to demonstrate its utter insufficiency, and to press upon philosophers the necessity of replacing it with a better. Such was undoubtedly its practical effect. Dr. Reid, the founder of what has been called the Scottish Philosophy, clearly saw that, in granting to Hume the first principles which he borrowed from the current theory of perception, it became impossible to withstand the sweeping conclusions of his scepticism. He therefore subjected those theories to a new and searching criticism. He demonstrated that they rested on mere assumptions which had been handed down from age to age without scrutiny, and that, when they came to be analyzed and compared with facts, they proved to be baseless dreams. He then substituted his doctrine of *immediate* instead of *representative* perception, and in doing so, cut away the foundation of the most formidable theory of universal disbelief which the world had seen.

Whenever the human mind attempts to realize to itself a speculative science, various causes of scepticism begin at once to operate. In each of these attempts, men usually grasp some great truth, but grasp it only in one of its phases, and disconnected from other truths not less essential. They discern one great power or principle, in the mind considered as an instrument of cognition, but in the contemplation of it they become so absorbed, and perhaps so entranced, that they overlook some other power equally real and important. Hence result partial and one-sided systems of philosophy, which are often positive and peremptory in their tone, in proportion as they are narrow and exclusive in their views. Such systems cannot possibly exist long without arousing an antagonist philosophy. The controversies between the Physical and Metaphysical

Eleatics; between the followers of Aristotle and those of Plato; like more modern disputes between the disciples respectively of Leibnitz and of Locke, are specimens of what has transpired in every age and every land that has reached the reflective or philosophic steep of culture. And each party naturally provokes scepticism, for each exaggerates the extent and importance of its own principles; each is relentless in its animadversions upon the rival theory; while both, by the violence with which they wage their controversies and the apparent barrenness, often, of their results,—suggest doubts whether all kindred inquiries be not destined to end in greater doubts and uncertainties.

Thus scepticism in Philosophy, which by a logical necessity involves speculative scepticism in Theology, may often be traced to a Dogmatic Philosophy. It is a natural reaction from it. Go where we will in the History of Philosophy, a reactionary Disbelief presents itself; now distrusting all knowledge, now rejecting that only which claims a scientific basis. Thus it was with the Vedantas in India; thus with Empedocles and Heraclitus in Greece, who recoiled from the warfare waged between the two Eleatic schools, and from the crude but arrogant pretensions of earlier sects. So also it was with the later sceptical school founded by Ænesedemus in the time of Cicero, and extending to Sextus Empiricus, who lived in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. In the four great philosophic sects, Epicureans, Stoics, Peripatetics, and the followers of the New Academy—in their endless debates, apparently as fruitless as they were violent—this School found ample provocation for an active and polemic scepticism. It is the same in more modern times. Montaigne, Bayle, Hume, with many more, profess to justify their speculative doubts by the errors and conflicts of prevailing schools in Metaphysical Philosophy.

It is curious to observe the different tempers with which this negation of all philosophy and all science is possessed. In some sceptics it is essentially frivolous, making sport of all truth, laughing at reason, and delighting in a Rhetoric and a Logic which can uphold by turns, and with equal success, each side of a question. Such were the Sophists, who found in Socrates their remorseless and irresistible foe. In others it is a gloomy and suicidal despair, which, hopeless of all other resources, sets itself calmly to demonstrate that doubt and uncertainty represent the normal condition of man's soul. Such was the school of Sextus Empiricus. But in others it does not end in mere suspense or negation. It revolts against Dialectic Science, but it cannot accept a cheerless theory of Disbelief as the substitute. In renouncing Science or Philosophy in its dogmatic or dialectic forms, it has recourse now to what Heraclitus called "The Universal and Divine Reason;"* now to what Pyrrho regarded as practical and moral in opposition to that which is merely speculative; now to instincts and intuitions which are to be regarded as the voice of the Divinity in our hearts; and now to Revelation, which, being the Divine Word in an objective and pre-eminently authoritative form, is to be held paramount as a criterion of truth.

In Philosophy as in Theology, Scepticism is a natural recoil from Dogmatism, which at one time affirms what it ought to prove, while at another it aspires to prove that which it can only affirm. It is also a natural recoil from Mysticism, which would dispense with proof altogether, and resolve all knowledge into intuitive beliefs and internal revelations. We are thus brought to the three grand systems—Dogmatism, Mysticism, and Scepticism—which have unfolded themselves wherever Philosophy was earnestly studied. These three systems represent three grand ele-

* Whatever was universally believed, as distinguished from individual opinions.

ments in the Constitution of the Human Mind, each of which has its legitimate sphere and office. There is in man, first, a disposition to believe, which, pushed to excess, is, in common life, credulity; in philosophy, mysticism. There is also a critical or logical understanding, which would scrutinize the grounds and reasons of our belief, and which, pushed beyond its appropriate province, may land us, as believers, in Rationalism; as unbelievers, in universal Scepticism. And this holds true of Philosophy and Theology alike. It is the work of the sober and large-minded thinker, so to combine these elements in the construction of scientific systems, that those systems shall be free alike from blind credulity, presumptuous rationalism, and captious scepticism. Thus, and thus only can we vindicate, in our philosophy and theology, a place for each one of these principles, and establish through the agency of a legitimate criticism, a final reconciliation between Faith and Reason.

To effect this reconciliation, has always been an object among philosophers who recognised the existence, in the soul, of an intuitional element. It has been sought, still more earnestly, among those who accepted the idea of a supernatural and objective Revelation. The effort springs up inevitably under every form of Religion which claims to have Sacred Books, and in the Christian church it has taxed the powers of her noblest thinkers. It doubtless owes much of its difficulty to the ambiguity of the two principal terms employed. Where the English tongue is spoken, the first idea which these terms probably convey to most minds is, that the one refers only to such knowledge as we gain through Revelation; the other only to that which we gain independently of it. By others familiar with the recent discoveries or pretensions of Physical Science, and with discrepancies alleged to exist between them and the teachings of Revelation, these terms will

suggest only ideas connected with the adjustment of such discrepancies.

In Speculative Philosophy, as we have already intimated, these terms are often employed to indicate the two leading organs which the soul naturally employs in the discovery and apprehension of truth. In Dogmatic Theology they are used to designate, on the one hand, such truths as can be vindicated on rational grounds, and reduced to some definite place in a system—on the other, those which have no guarantee at all except Revelation. In Practical Religion, again, we use these terms to express a distinction of vast importance to the life and power of Christianity. It is, that there are truths which cannot be entirely compassed by a merely logical understanding or intuitional consciousness; for the proper apprehension of which there must be a special and preternatural capability,—a subjective preparation,—which, beginning in the honest and sincere heart of the natural man, is taught more and more by the Divine Spirit, till it ends in that power of discerning and relishing the peculiar glory of the Gospel, which characterizes the new man in Christ Jesus. It is evident that the respective functions of Faith and Science, and their essential harmony, will never be thoroughly established till these various meanings are more clearly and carefully discriminated.

We have already expressed our conviction that the human mind has original functions that pertain both to Faith and Reason, and that, as well in Philosophy as in Theology, there is a legitimate place for both. He who ignores wholly, or in great part, the sphere of the intuitional faculty, and attempts to establish everything by proof, is justly stigmatized as a *rationalist*, because he charges reason with more than its proper share of responsibility, and offers to it an extravagant homage. In his blind zeal, too, he overlooks the fact that, in the beginning of its operations, the mind

must proceed upon belief, which it accepts for the time merely upon the strength of intuitive impressions, but which it may afterwards subject to various critical or logical tests. On the other hand, he who appeals only, or chiefly, to instinctive convictions or spontaneous impressions, is justly termed a *mystic*, since he withholds these convictions and impressions from the scrutiny which is necessary, in order to ascertain their validity, and to discriminate those which are merely personal and individual from those which, in a more or less developed form, belong to man everywhere, and at all times. The rationalist, whether in Philosophy or in Theology, says, *Understand that you may believe*; the mystic, on the other hand, cries out, *Believe that you may understand*.* Both are right, and both wrong—right, in so far as they would make faith and reason complementary each to the other; wrong, so far as they contend that either is wholly paramount over or independent of its complement.

Philosophical Scepticism, which founds its doubts exclusively on speculative considerations, may, as we have said, be merely theoretical. In respect to many matters it must be so. In regard, for example, to the life that now is, no man is a practical sceptic, nor even in respect to the life which is to come, if his soul be suddenly confronted with its more awful realities. But we are far from intimating that speculative scepticism is therefore innocuous. In regard to the more spiritual truths that pertain to the soul's welfare, it is easy to suppress, and, by degrees, almost eradicate them. The habit of doubting and cavilling about evidence is one, too, that soon engenders either a profane levity or a profound despondency. Mr. Hume's death-bed, signalized by coarse jests about the Styx, Charon and his boatmen, seems no unnatural conclu-

* *Crede ut intelligas*,—the maxim which St. Anselm professed and made famous in the schools, in opposition to that of Abelard,—*Intellige ut credas*.

sion to a life so much of which had been devoted to unsettling the very foundations of all belief. Pliny the Elder gives utterance to the dismal sense of incertitude which haunted many a thoughtful mind in his day, in some such words as the following: "What God is, if he be distinct from the world, no human understanding can know. To suppose that such an Infinite Spirit, be it what it may, can trouble itself with the miserable affairs of men, is a foolish fancy, proceeding from the helpless weakness of human nature. . . . Man is full of contradictions—full of wishes and desires, running into infinity, which can never be gratified, and his nature is a lie; the greatest poverty united with the greatest pride."*

When minds have had experience of these horrors of a sceptical delirium, and are brought to accept Revelation, it is not surprising that they often attempt to put honour upon it by depreciating man's unaided reason. In this way a peculiar modification of scepticism springs up, which works entirely in the interests of Revealed Theology. It has no respect for Natural Religion. It pours contempt on all the efforts of Speculative or Metaphysical Philosophy. Even Physical Science it is prone to denounce, as full of unwarrantable assumptions and profane self-confidence. It falls back entirely on authority, now that of the Church, now that of the Written Word, and now that of inward Revelations, which ought, in its judgment, to supersede alike the dogmas of Ecclesiastical tradition and the letter of a mere Book-revelation. It is curious to observe how this phase of Philosophic Scepticism has, under two of these forms, found its ablest advocates among Christian Divines and Theologians of the most orthodox school.† In many cases,

* Hist. Nat., lib. II., c. 7, lib. VII., &c.

† Wherever there are sacred books claiming to be from Heaven (as in India and Arabia), there we shall find a corresponding phenomenon. Thus, among

it has been the last resource of men who had previously sought rest only in philosophy. Thus the great work of Huët,* on "The Weakness of the Human Understanding," is from the pen of one who had rested at first in the philosophy of Des Cartes, but had been driven by its defects to embrace the antagonist system of Gassendi. Here, again, he found no rest; and at length, in his despair of human reason, gave himself over to the Idolatry of Revelation. It was much the same with Pascal. The sublime but exaggerated strains in which he expatiates upon the impotence of man's reason, may be traced to the discontent with which, turning from the rigorous methods of Geometry to the Moral Sciences, he discovered that they, independently of Revelation, conducted him to no demonstrative certainty. The same causes seem to have been at work in the case of Glanville, who was Court Preacher to Charles II., and author of the *Scep sis Scientifica*, or *Confessed Ignorance, the Way to Science*, and in that of Count de Maistre, who in his zeal for the Church as man's only authorized teacher, has proclaimed the imbecility of the intellect with great eloquence in his work entitled *Evenings at St. Petersburg*, &c. Thus it is, that while the disciples of a narrow Philosophy sometimes land in religious unbelief, the Religionist, on the other hand, is not without danger from a species of speculative or philosophical scepticism, which, if it were consistent with itself, would be as fatal to Theology as to Philosophy.

the most eminent of Arabian philosophers, in the eleventh century, was one (Al Gazel), who, after having displayed himself in the characters of a dogmatic philosopher and a defender of Islamism, became at last "a sceptic philosopher in the interest of Theology." In his book on the *Destruction of Philosophers*, he employed all the resources of dialectics to batter down all dogmatic systems, from whence resulted, according to him, the necessity of resorting to the revelations of the Koran, in order to avoid absolute scepticism.

* Peter Daniel Huët, Bishop of Avranches, born in Caen, 1630.

For, if the human reason be indeed utterly powerless, how is it to distinguish a true Revelation from a spurious one? How discriminate the works of Beelzebub from those of God? Or, granting that we have a Revelation properly authenticated, how, without reason, are we to compass its true meaning? The Bible contains much that is plain, but plain mainly because it commends itself intuitively to an inward witness in the soul which we call Reason. The Bible contains much also that is obscure, as is proved by the many various and contradictory interpretations which have been proposed. How are these obscurities to be cleared away, and these contradictions and variations (the reproach not only of Protestantism, but of all Christendom)—how, without the earnest, persevering, and laborious use of the highest as well as the lowest reason, are these to be reconciled? If, instead of the Bible, we substitute the Church as our authoritative guide, we only complicate the difficulty; for more than one Church presses forward to demand from us the obedience of the faith, and what but this same despised and outlawed reason can distinguish between the legitimate Sovereign and the mere Pretender? He, then, who, in the service of Religion, proposes to bring dishonour on Reason as wholly imbecile and incompetent, pulls down the very bulwarks which he is most anxious to strengthen and build up.

In matters pertaining to the soul, there is abundant need, no doubt, of a Revelation; and, to make that Revelation answer its full purpose there is need, also, of all the help that Reason can give us in studying its contents. The Bible was given to Man to be, with Nature, his Educator. It would build him up from weakness to strength by the one only way—effort—effort earnest and prolonged—effort that leans continually on God for efficient strength, but that subserves its grand end only as it enlists all the powers

of the soul—Reason, Conscience, Sensibility, Will. Hence Revelation, like Nature and Providence, has its difficulties. *O the depths!* is the cry that comes up from the largest and the most enlightened mind, when pondering over the contents of Holy Scripture. And so it will ever be. There is no greater or more perilous delusion than that which now possesses many Christians on this subject. The assumption—that, if a Revelation be given at all it must needs be attended with *certain* evidence—is granted even by Protestants as if it expressed an incontestable truth. It contains the very essence of the Absolutism of Papal Infallibility. God has given Nature to be a Teacher, and that teacher at every step raises questions which it does not answer. At every step it plants difficulties in our path, and these difficulties are seen to be useful, both to our intellects and to our moral nature. In the task of clearing away one after another of these difficulties some of our highest enjoyments are found, and some of our most important advances in speculative and practical wisdom are made. And shall it not be so with the greatest of all teachers, even Christ? Is He to leave nothing to task our faith—nothing to exercise our patience as inquirers—nothing to discipline our humility as thinkers—nothing to develop and improve our investigating powers? While He solves many a doubt for which Nature had no answer, is He to dissipate all ignorance, and invest even finite minds with an Infinite Wisdom?

Revelation does, indeed, promise rest; but it is not the rest of omniscience. It is the rest of the confiding child reposing without fear on a Father's wise and unalterable love; it is the rest of a redeemed captive that feels the arm of the great Deliverer to be near, and all-sufficient for the remaining toils and dangers of the way to its free home. It is the rest of a liberated soul, that delights in beholding

one after another barrier of ignorance and uncertainty give way, as it uses faithfully the powers that have been bestowed upon it. Intellectual anarchy is a characteristic of our times; and it is, we firmly believe, through a proper acceptance of Revelation that each one is for himself to terminate that anarchy. Here, as elsewhere, we believe that Christ is the great centre of mediation, but we also believe that, to borrow the words of another, "it is utterly to mistake the true character of that reconciling power which lies in Christianity, to ascribe to it a purely intellectual as well as moral force. Christ came not to resolve the enigmas of human philosophy, but to restore the harmony of human life. If the Christian, therefore, finds a refuge in the Gospel from the oppression of those intellectual contradictions which have been in all ages the torture of speculation,—it is not because he is enabled to see with the intellectual eye more clearly than others, but because he is enabled to repose in the perfect peace which flows to him from the Cross, amid all speculative difficulties whatever. We would not say with Vinet, therefore, 'this word (the Cross) re-organizes *thought* and the *world*,' but simply this word re-organizes the world, and, through the practical unity which it brings, prepares the way, if not for speculative unity, yet for speculative submission. To proclaim anything more than this is, we believe, radically to misrepresent the Truth, and to gainsay the most obvious and undeniable evidence all around us. A Christian Philosophy,—a satisfactory solution of the problems which meet us whenever we penetrate to the depths of Christian Thought,—is still notoriously a desideratum; and if the traces of it may be discerned at length by the patient and thoughtful eye among the suggestions of a more genial, and reverent, and comprehensive philosophic spirit, it assuredly

does not yet present itself as a clear and complete doctrine.”*

3. *Religious Scepticism.*

One who holds to *absolute* scepticism must, of course, maintain that the Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion are essentially defective when tried by a scientific or strictly philosophical standard. But, as in things pertaining to this world, he does not allow theoretical doubts to interfere with practical beliefs, so it may be, and often is, in religious matters. Berkeley, though he denied that, on the principles of the philosophy then current, we had any proper evidence of the existence of matter, was yet a firm believer in Revelation. So Hume, though he went further, and contended that, on the same principles, we are without adequate proof even of our own existence, or of any truth whatever, still claimed to be a theist in his practical convictions, and, while sitting amidst the Atheistic philosophers of Paris, boldly avowed his conviction that a real Atheist did not exist.† In truth, in asserting, on abstract grounds, the incompetency of human reason, the sceptic Hume and the extreme supernaturalist Huët or De Maistre occupy

* North British Review, No. XLII.

† Said Diderot to Sir Samuel Romilly, “Je vous dirai un trait de lui, mais il vous sera un peu scandaleux peut-être, car vous Anglais vous croyez *un peu* en Dieu ; pour nous autres nous n’y croyons guères. Hume dina avec une grande compagnie chez le Baron D’Hollbach. Il était assis à côté du Baron ; on parla de la religion naturelle : ‘Pour les Athées,’ disait Hume, ‘je ne crois pas qu’il en existe ; je n’en ai jamais vu.’ ‘Vous avez été un peu malheureux,’ répondit l’autre, ‘vous voici à table avec dix-sept pour la première fois.’” *Memoirs of Romilly*, Vol. I. p. 179. On turning to the late life of Hume by Burton (Vol. II. pp. 141, 451–2, &c.) the reader will see still more striking evidence to the same point. On one occasion Hume will be found denying that he is even a Deist ; on another, when walking with a friend (Adam Ferguson) on a clear and beautiful night, suddenly stopping, looking up to the starry sky and exclaiming, “O Adam ! can any one contemplate the wonders of that firmament and not believe that there is a God !”

positions by no means dissimilar. Hence it is to be remembered that speculative or philosophical scepticism is an aberration for which we are to look within as well as without the Church.

Religious scepticism, whether founded in philosophy or otherwise, is of various degrees. In its lowest form, it is the mere negation of religious in common with all other belief. In its next higher form, it recognises the existence of a religious Power, but denies with Fatalism, its freedom, or with Pantheism, its personality. As Deism, it rises to the recognition of a personal God but rejects Revelation. As Supernaturalism, it accepts Revelation but professes at the same time profound distrust in all Indications of a Creator which are presented by Nature or by Man. And we find these gradations not merely in Christian countries, but also among Jews, Mahommedans and Pagans. There are, moreover, corresponding varieties even among those who profess to be believers. In Judea, in the time of Christ, we find Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes, just as now we find throughout Christendom, the Orthodox or dogmatic, the Rationalistic or sceptical, and the Mystic or inner-light schools.

Wherever a positive system of Religion—whether Christian, Pagan or Mahommedan—exists and gradually shapes itself into a dogmatic or systematic form, there the innate tendencies of the human mind to critical inquiry will develop a certain amount of objection and unbelief. If the system as held by its disciples is intolerant of dissent, the scepticism will be concealed; but in the degrading necessity which compels silence, it often finds a reason for increased strength and virulence. We hardly read of such a thing as avowed religious scepticism in Christendom during the Middle Ages; and yet we know enough of the activity of the human mind in speculative inquiries during

a part of that time, and we hear enough now of Italian and Spanish Ecclesiastics who are Deists or Atheists at heart, to be assured that it existed even then in no scanty measure. When the Revival of Letters and the Reformation of the 16th Century had given back intellectual freedom to the Christians of Europe, the open avowal of doubts in respect to Religion was to be expected. The Scholastic Philosophy had accepted without question certain first principles in Religion, on the simple *dictum* of the Church. When the authority of that *dictum* came to be rejected, many minds would reject at the same time most of the beliefs which it enjoined. Others reach religious scepticism at all periods, by the abuse of Metaphysical Speculations. Others embrace it as a recoil from some narrow system of theology, which, in its unrelenting austerity, ignores some of the noblest powers and gentlest instincts of our nature. Others abjure all forms of Christianity, because Christianity becomes associated in their minds with the ferocious intolerance with which those who profess special zeal for Christ or his Church, trample down all freedom of worship or thought. Others again become disgusted with the endless schisms, debates and oppositions of those who profess a Religion of peace and good-will; and others, as before the French Revolution, reject the reigning faith in consequence of the immorality of the Clergy. General licentiousness of manners, also, naturally favours infidelity, because men steeped in immorality feel that they need it as a shelter against the misgivings and protests of Conscience, which otherwise would poison their pleasures. To conclude, we must remember that a large portion of the Religious Unbelief of any one time or place is inherited from the past. This is the case with the French Infidelity of our day, which is but a sad legacy from a former generation—the result, for the most part, of early prejudices and

associations. Whoever travels for a few hours with a Frenchman, who represents the average opinion and feeling of France, will see that the nation at large have hardly heard of Christianity, except as a superstition which merits consideration only from priests and women.

We see, then, why it is that Religious scepticism holds a place in the Literature of Christian nations, since the 16th century, altogether more prominent than before. We also see why in Protestant countries, practising the toleration which their principles compel them to profess, Infidelity declares itself much more frankly and openly than in countries where intolerance is held to be a duty. There is little doubt that the last two centuries have given birth, in England and in this country, to more anti-christian Literature, than had appeared in all Christendom previously for thrice that time. It is hardly to be regretted. An open is better than a secret enemy; a foe without the citadel is to be preferred to a traitor within it. Christianity always gains ultimately from a direct assault on the ground of Evidence and argument. Her disciples then tax their energies and resources. Investigation serves the double purpose of reassuring her friends and disheartening her foes, for it discloses her own abounding resources, and the inherent weakness of every weapon which has, thus far, been formed against her. What our faith has most to dread, is a disguised unbelief which deals in honeyed phrases, and affects, in the name of Reason, to patronize the Bible. Her next most deadly enemy is an insidious immorality, which creeps in under the dishonoured names of thrift and enterprise. Industry is to be honoured; a far-reaching and frugal enterprise is to be held in reverence; but alas! for a land which is making haste to be rich; which, in its insatiate greed, invokes the sacred names of patriotism and religion; which must and will have money, not so

much to hoard as to spend; and which, that it may compass its ends, carries votes, principles, and even faith in God, to the shambles!

Thus far there is much to inspire hope. Those countries in which there is the most of avowed unbelief are the very countries in which there is most of earnest and practical Religious Faith. But there is enough always, in the best state of Christian Society, to warrant solicitude and to excite to increased effort. In this land our faith is assailed within the Church by Scepticism on one side, by Dogmatism and Mysticism on the other. It is also assailed still more by a sordid and earthly spirit which professes to despise enthusiasm and casts contempt on the heroic virtues. Beyond the great congregation of "those who profess and call themselves Christians" there are some who think that they honour Natural Science by casting dishonour on Revealed Religion. Others have brought from transatlantic countries the worst elements of a ferocious impiety, and openly profess neither to fear God nor to regard man. There are those, again, who, in their sublimated dreams of man's destiny, and in their too exalted conceptions of man's rights, think little of our duties and responsibilities, and make altogether too light of the deep foundation which has been laid in man's soul for an active, all-pervading religious faith. And, finally, there are many who, in their philosophic theories, start from conceptions of the human mind and its capabilities, which necessarily involve self-idolatry and the rejection of all authoritative teaching from any objective source.

In this state of things, what is our duty? What is incumbent now on all ministers, and on intelligent laymen who bear the name and vows of Christ? To despise danger is the way to make it formidable. To look down with supercilious contempt on an adversary, brings with it

neglect of all proper precaution against his arts and his violence. The cause of Revelation is doubtless safe in the hand of God. But, to divest those who have been expressly charged with the duty of defending it and of spreading its truths over the world—to divest them of all care and concern, and then expect that the Most High will be its defence, is to disregard all the lessons of experience and all the teachings of the Divine Word. God honours those who, as his stewards, are striving most earnestly to honour him. By neglect, at a juncture like this, we may incur, for our own generation, the heaviest of all penalties—in the loss of the Divine Presence and Benediction, and we may give over the fairest earthly heritage in Christendom to be a prey to the spoiler. Ultimately, the faith of Christ, however cast down, shall doubtless rise again and go forth to reconquer the power it may have lost, and mount up slowly to the dominion which might have been hers at a much earlier day had we been faithful. But, meanwhile, what triumphs will have been won by unbelief—what grievous wounds inflicted on the best hopes of Humanity for many generations—what passions left untamed—what vice and immorality left unopposed to carry desolation into unnumbered homes and hearts!

We have, then, in respect to the great issue between Faith and Unbelief, our part to act, and it behooves us to understand it well, and to fulfil it with a brave heart. Our first and most imperative duty, as we have already said, is to illustrate Christianity in our lives. It is a *Power* through which the evil in our hearts and in the world ought to be subdued, and the reign of truth, and holiness, and love made universal among men. The reality of this Power can become evident only through its effects on the practice of those who own its influence, as compared with theirs who own it not. No more impressive historical argument,

for the Divine Origin of Christianity, can be found than the marvellous revolution which it wrought, at first, in the principles and conduct of individuals and of societies. Its early history is one before which sceptics and scoffers are dumb. Other forms of religious zeal have inspired men with an enthusiasm which could stand firm against persecution and death. But none, before that which the Gospel kindled, enabled men to rule their own spirits, to triumph over carnal appetite, to rise superior to hatred, envy, and malice, to burn with an all-comprehending love for men, to attain to a true meekness and humility, and to reach the highest eminences of personal sanctity before God, without one touch of spiritual pride or self-sufficiency. In making common such transformations as was wrought on Saul of Tarsus, the doctrine of Christ and Him crucified put to silence the foolishness of gainsaying men, and wrung from multitudes the exclamation, *we will go with you, for God is with you of a truth*. That renewing and transforming power, then, has only to be demonstrated now; men have only to see beyond peradventure that the Faith of Christ is a living spring from which all that is amiable, lovely, and of good report, wells out—a force which impels all on whom it acts to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with God; and forthwith they shall yield to it the homage of their hearts. They shall not ask whether that Gospel which we offer them is from Heaven or of men. Gladly, eagerly they shall press towards its waters of life, and drink that they may thirst no more. Here, then, is our grandest need—a new baptism for the members and ministers of Christ, that they may be quickened to a devotedness in the performance of every good work, which shall leave no room for doubt whether they walk after the flesh or after the Spirit.

Our next need is a more thorough study of the Evidences

of Religion in the light of existing facts and necessities. The progress of Natural Science has supplied us with new materials for the arguments of Natural Theology. Even the argument for Design, which, in this branch of Apologetics, has been most largely developed, needs, in its connexion with Physiology, to be amended and enlarged. A new principle has been unfolded in the kingdoms of organic nature, under the name of Homology, which reveals designs of a broader kind than ordinary adaptations, and which needs to be kept steadily in view in reconstructing the doctrines of Teleology. Those doctrines need, also, to be extended by drawing more largely on the Psychological and Ethical departments of our own nature, and by an ampler and more searching review of the course of Human History. They need, also, to have added to them those evidences for the Divine Existence and Character which are furnished in the primordial conceptions and unalterable moral convictions of our race. We owe, moreover, to this branch of the Evidences a clearer apprehension of the objections started by modern unbelief, and a more full and precise refutation of them.

The Evidences in favour of Revealed Religion, as contained in the Old and New Testaments, have been discussed with surpassing power and ability within the last two centuries. Such books as Butler's Analogy, Clark's Natural and Revealed Religion, Lardner's Credibility, and Paley's Evidences, never become obsolete. But we must consider that the Internal Evidences of Christianity have never yet been largely and thoroughly discussed in the light of Psychology. We must also consider that historical criticism, researches in Geology, Ethnology and Archæology, and a rigorous exegesis, have raised questions peculiar to our own time—questions which are not to be disposed of by a sneer or a denunciation. We must remember, too, that it is not

every one who speaks or writes on Christianity that is quite competent to deal with these questions. The cavils and criticisms even of able and learned men are sometimes extremely shallow. But, in other cases, they are the result of actual difficulties which are permitted by the Author of Revelation to try our faith, and stimulate our researches and reflections. They demand, therefore, a thorough, manly treatment. They deserve to be approached with the utmost calmness and patience,—in no spirit of apprehension, but with a profound confidence, that, like a thousand difficulties which have preceded them, they are destined to disappear before resolute inquiry. All past experience proclaims that the authority of the Bible is safe. Science has been invoked, over and over again, to convict it of anachronisms, and of being false to nature. The appeal has been made to wear a still more forbidding aspect, through the tenacity with which believers have insisted on current but unauthorized interpretations of Scripture. But the result thus far has been invariable. It has rebuked alike the scientific sciolist and the biblical sciolist. The one has been taught that his crude generalizations are not always, or even generally truth. The other has learned that his renderings of obscure passages, and his inferences from incidental hints, are not necessarily an expression of the mind of the Spirit. It would be well if the inquirers of our time would learn wisdom from all this dear-bought experience. It would protect the friends of the Bible from prematurely pledging themselves to views as Divine which are merely human. It would save the votaries of science and erudition from unwarrantably assailing God's Word with speculations about His works, which time and inquiry soon brand as puerilities. There is, even now, between philosophers on the one hand, and theologians on the other, an acrimony which is wholly unnecessary, and which can

only do mischief. It disturbs the serenity which is necessary to the acquisition of truth. It tends to induce an estrangement which ought to be deplored by every friend of Religion and of Learning. The Revelation made through Nature and Man cannot be really at war with that which the same Infinite Intelligence has made through Scripture. To have the Students, then, of these two Revelations arrayed against each other, and bent upon extracting from them opposite and contradictory readings, is only condemning themselves to disgrace and disappointment. It is to obstruct, in the most direct and effectual manner, the very work to which they profess to have devoted themselves.

Dr. Wichern, at one of the meetings in behalf of the Inner Mission in Germany, declared that the friends of the Bible and of a high spiritual piety, had all the Science, Art, and Literature of the Empire against them. It was an exaggeration natural to an earnest mind, bent on rousing itself and others to a just comprehension of their duty and responsibility. It is, happily, less true of Germany now than it was when he gave utterance to the remark. But it does apply to that land to a degree which is truly appalling, though we firmly believe that its propriety is daily becoming less. Let it never be the reproach of the land in which we live. Nothing could well bode worse for a nation of readers like ours, stimulated by their institutions and their material position to an intense activity, than to have its cultivated intelligence at war with its piety. Religion hails learning and intellectual force as her best earthly allies. When she parts with them she not only parts with her main arms for defence and aggression, but she condemns herself, almost inevitably, to be the prey of superstition and fanaticism. Such divorce, too, is full of peril for Science and Literature. Neither of them pursues its work well and wisely, unless its love of truth is purified by a Divine Wisdom and

exalted by a Divine Faith. He who begins any work of inquiry, fearing to find the footsteps of God and loathing the offence of the Cross, has not a soul opened as it should be, to the light. Even when he is looking only after natural truth or human lore, he is often in the sad condition of those who, seeing, see not; who have ears, but hear not; and hearts, but understand not.

It is hardly to be hoped that these lines will be read by those who are pursuing scientific researches, under the influence of sentiments unfriendly to Revelation. If they are, it would be presumption to expect that such minds would be greatly moved by them. Yet we may venture to suggest that, even where this hostility to Revelation does exist, it can rarely promote the interests of Science to obtrude it into discussions, which ought to be kept strictly to their object. If, for example, the unity of the human race be a delusion, it can be exposed by the appropriate evidence. To adjourn the question from the bar of nature to that of Biblical learning, and then disfigure the debate with flippant sneers at the superstition and ignorance of those who reverence the Scriptures, is to lose sight of the very object professed, while it raises passions wholly incompatible with the rapid advancement of truth. This course is not confined to the enemies of Revelation. Its friends, unhappily, sometimes adopt a corresponding course; and the inevitable consequence is that they discredit the Bible, while they obstruct the progress of calm and rigorous inquiry. We must confess, however, that we have never, in the whole extent of our reading, met anything which, in this respect, is so offensive to good taste and to the first principles of Inductive Philosophy, as the elaborate work recently given to the world under the title of *Types of Mankind*. Written under the influence of avowed prejudices against certain races of men, and descending to the

use of caricature in order to bring them into disrepute, it stops at hardly anything which can cast reproach on Scripture. No jests are too coarse, no revilings too bitter or contemptuous, no special pleading too perverse. It is mournful to find that such names as those of Morton and Agassiz are destined to go down to posterity, associated with such unseemly exhibitions of spite and intolerance. A cenotaph to Morton, one of the calmest and most dignified philosophers that any age or country has seen, should be stained by no scurrility, defamed by no violence. It is an insult to his memory to suppose that he could have desired his unpublished writings to be given to the world, in close connexion with an attack on the Bible, the malevolence of which is only equalled by its impotence.

Let no such example be followed. It is undoubtedly provocative in its influence, and was, we fear, intended to be so. But truth could gain nothing from retaliation, while decency and charity would lose much. If the Bible is to be assailed in this spirit by men of science, its friends have only to be patient. But we hope better things. We much mistake the disposition of the ablest representatives of Physical Science, on both sides of the Atlantic, if it be not more penetrated with religious convictions at this time than it was fifty years since. Many of them are more than ever satisfied that such convictions are an essential auxiliary and a crowning grace to their work. But they ask that issues which are merely scientific should not be obscured and complicated with considerations that are wholly extrinsic, and that only tend to rouse angry passions. And in this they are right. It is wholly to misconceive the nature and object of the Bible, as we think, to offer it as an arbiter in controversies which are properly physical. It exhibits nature as it exhibits man—not in the abstract, but in the concrete—not with the precision

of science, but with the fulness, freshness and force, which best commend it to the business and bosoms of men ; and it is thus most admirably fitted not merely to inform the understanding, but also to exalt the imagination, to fire the affections, and to constrain the will. To these, the highest purposes of our existence, let it be held sacred.

The Philosophy of Religion.

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I.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.

"Thy word is truth." ST. JOHN, VIII: 17.

THE Philosophy of Religion, as a whole, is not so much one theme as the verbal enclosure of many. Our aim will be accomplished if we shall succeed in handling some one of these with even partial thoroughness. The Philosophy of Religion, strictly defined, signifies neither the general relation of speculative thought to religion, nor the more particular one of reason to revelation: nor yet does it require us to search after that form and style of philosophy which most nearly accords with religion. Rather would it seem to invite an effort so to unfold and exhibit the structure and powers of religion as to elucidate its fitness to the end for which it claims to work.

The philosophy of a system commonly falls under three divisions: 1st, an inquiry into its structure or organization; 2d, an inquiry into the mode by which such structure or organization manifests itself; and 3d, an inquiry into its adaptation to the end for which it was instituted. Thus, with regard to the external world, we ask, first, what it is, next, how it works, and, lastly, for what it works, and whether it is likely to answer the purpose for which it was created. Each inquiry is quite independent of the others, and yet taken together, they cover the whole ground which a philosophy of nature can legitimately claim. Now it is under one or the other of these three forms of investigation, that

the Philosophy of Religion must be treated. We may examine the structure of revealed religion as a spiritual organism: and this would lead us to inspect its several parts and the law of their combination; to ask, for example, whether an external revelation is possible; and if so, in virtue of what attributes in its author, and what capacities in man its recipient. Or, omitting the structure, we might inquire into the method of its operation on the human heart; and this would suggest questions on the theory of grace as a supernatural influence, and on the condition of the soul as demanding such an aid. Or, again, we might seek after the tokens which religion furnishes of its suitableness to the being whom it labours to redeem and to regenerate. These several inquiries, fully carried out, would exhaust the Philosophy of Religion.

Now, as the limits of a single discourse forbid our attempting to pursue more than one of these, we shall take the last as the subject of present remark. And we do so for the reason that the other lines of thought stretch necessarily into the region of metaphysical discussion. Still we would not intimate that they are less important than the one we propose to follow, or that they less deserve to be wrought out. Indeed, questions of the weightiest character are concerned in their determination. The doctrine of inspiration, philosophically examined, leads of necessity to an inquiry into the relation of the subjective to the objective—of what is in man to what is without him—of the internal faculty to the external truth: an inquiry lying at the root of the most obscure and knotty problem in metaphysical science. Necessary as such an examination may be, and properly as it comes within the scope of our subject, it is too subtle and intricate, and, except we were to follow a process at once tedious and technical, promising too little tangible fruit to be introduced on an occasion like this. We prefer, there-

fore, instead of examining the abstract rationality of the structure and method of Christianity, to unfold its suitability to the end for which it professes to work. The question of adaptation is always a palpable one, and leads to results immediately appreciable.

It will be our purpose, then, to demonstrate the general fitness of Christianity to its end, by demonstrating that fitness in three most essential particulars. We shall endeavour to show, 1st, its adaptation to bring man under its power; 2d, its adaptation to keep him there, not only as an individual, but as a race; and, 3d, its adaptation to elevate and transform his whole nature.

And we would so far anticipate our remarks as to observe that the leading inference we wish to draw from the argument is this, that, inasmuch as it is granted that such a regeneration of the ruined nature of man as Christianity proposes can be accomplished by no human or earthly means, therefore, if Christianity demonstrates its power to accomplish such a result, it may justly claim not only a single supernatural element in its structure, but a divine origin for its whole system as well in its institutional, as in its doctrinal and preceptive, character. We may say moreover, that we have no hope to be able to elaborate any new evidence. Our utmost wish is to uncover and brighten up, by the attrition of analysis and illustration, some links in that indestructible chain of proofs which binds our Holy Faith, at once and immortally, to the throne of God and to the destiny of man.

The first point, then, to which we invite attention, is the adaptation of the Christian religion to bring man under its influence. The Christian religion finds man its natural enemy, and, to reach his character, it has to deal with him as one capable of resistance. Now, to overcome positive hostility, and to secure, in its place, and, in such a creature as

man, an equally positive and voluntary obedience, is a task from which any system less than divine might well shrink. Christianity in its conquest of human nature might have opposed one kind of force to another, and have presented itself exclusively in an aspect which is now only one among many. It might have come as a message offering only its own intrinsic authority, and uttered as a naked commandment. It might have addressed the being whom it would save only as the fiat of a supreme will addresses an inferior will. But this it has not chosen to do. Without bating its imperative tone as a commandment, it offers itself as a system challenging the assent of the human understanding, and, as a form of truth, asserting its power to reach the heart through the intelligent convictions of the reason. Though in its heights and depths a mystery, yet it scorns to plant itself on mere credulity or passive acquiescence: and while it calls for faith, it is a faith allied to and supported by conscious thought. In fine, its formula is not only "thou shalt not," as speaking to the will; but, "come let us reason together," as addressed to the intellect. Such being its character, it aims to bring man under its influence, 1st, by moving his will through the preventing grace of the Holy Spirit, thus disposing him to a voluntary reciprocity of the truth; 2d, by convincing his understanding through the instrumentality of evidence—thus adding the sanctions of reason to the motions of an external spiritual power.

In the further discussion of this point, we shall confine ourselves to the mechanism of Christian evidence as adapted to satisfy every rational expectation of man, and to convince him of his obligation to accept the Gospel as a mode of belief and as a rule of life. In pursuance of this end, we shall note the *quality* and *variety* of Christian evidence.

And, first, the *quality* or kind. It is well known that

the evidence which Christianity offers, rests on probability, not demonstration ; and it is sometimes matter of complaint that it is so. It is urged that on a theme of such absorbing interest the proof should be so conclusive as to leave no room for doubt : whereas, in this case, it is claimed that the proof is such that it may be rejected even after fair examination. Still, the evidence offered is, on all sides, regarded as possessed of more than ordinary cogency ; and, on a subject involving a lower claim, as amply sufficient. Now there are three considerations on this point which should ever be vividly and fully before the mind. But unfortunately it is just these three that the objectors to the validity of Christian evidence always forget, and forgetting, arrive necessarily at the most illogical as well as perilous conclusions. The considerations to which we refer are these : 1st, that none other than probable evidence could be had or given for a spiritual system like that of Christianity, composed, as it is, of appeals to the moral rather than the intellectual nature of man ; of truths which the awakened conscience can alone properly authenticate, and of mysteries which lie beyond the range of the understanding ; 2d, that absolute certainty of proof would be incompatible with the probationary character of the present life of man.

It would be absurd to tie up a free agent to an absolute demonstration on a subject involving the settlement of his moral character. It would be quite as much in place to urge the force of strictly moral proof in the solution of a geometrical theorem. On all moral subjects where the will must act, the only appropriate evidence is that which leaves open a broad margin for the play of that faculty. Its freedom forbids constraint, and to leave that freedom untrammelled, the proof offered must be such as to be capable of denial. The conclusions of the rational faculty are but so many intellectual motives presented to the will to aid it in

its decisions. If these conclusions be demonstrative rather than probable, they exclude the possibility of choice, and hence leave the will or moral nature nothing to do. But to that nature Christianity appeals, and the proof it offers to the understanding is given to assist the will in choosing, not to deprive it of choice; and therefore that proof must rest on probability, not demonstrative certainty.

The 3d consideration referred to as usually forgotten by sceptics, is, that demonstrative proof, though it could be had, would not be so absolutely satisfactory as they suppose. Consciousness is surer than demonstration, for it furnishes the axioms on which every demonstrative process necessarily rests. And wherever the two come into collision, we uniformly prefer the witness of consciousness to that of demonstration. We are taught, for instance, on the authority of positive demonstration, that a polygon with an indefinite number of sides is exactly coincident with an inscribed or circumscribed circle. Now consciousness laughs at such a result. We do not believe such a mathematical fiction any more because dressed up in lines, figures, and formulas, for it contradicts an intuitive conviction of the mind. But though demonstrative evidence were all that some suppose, it would, as already observed, be as much out of place in the sphere of moral conduct and spiritual determinations as mere probability would be in that of exact science.

It is too generally forgotten by the assailants of Christianity that the questions which it proposes to man, in the way of its own authentication, are in no respect different in nature from those which he is called to decide every day of his life. The historian cannot write a page, the advocate cannot plead a case, nor can judges and courts of law adjudicate upon a disputed claim, without meeting just such questions. They are questions into the decision of which other ingredients besides evidence have a chance to enter. Interest may blind, passion

may warp, wickedness may utterly vitiate the mental process which they demand. They are questions such as these : "Whether a certain amount and complexity of testimony are likely to be false : whether it is likely that not one, but a number of men, would endure disgrace and martyrdom in support of an unprofitable lie : whether such a scheme as that of Christianity is likely to have been the production of unlettered peasants : whether anything so sublime was to be expected from fools, or anything so holy from knaves : whether illiterate fraud was likely to be equal to such a stupendous and symmetrical fabrication : whether infinite artifice may be expected from ignorance, or a perfectly natural and successful assumption of truth from imposture."* Now, on issues like these, were they submitted to a court of law, there is not an intelligent judge or respectable jury in the land who would not be ready to render a verdict without leaving their seats. The probabilities of the case are overwhelming ; and, were it not that infidelity actually exists among us, we might suppose that no sane mind could, for a moment, resist their force. But alas ! when you throw into the scale a bad heart, there is no telling what amount of evidence will give truth an abiding hold on the intellect and the conscience.

For this reason we regard infidelity not so much as a conviction to be argued against, as a sin to be denounced. It is an exhalation from a moral miasma. Its power of diffusion lies in its power of appeal to the very distemper of soul out of which it springs. It feeds on the principle that produces it. Consistencies, either moral or logical, it has none. What seem such are but the distortions of right reason. The few sparks floating over its darkness only number its thefts from the flaming altars of Christianity. We may conclude on this branch of our subject with the

* Rogers's Essays.

suggestive aphorism of Pascal, "God has afforded sufficient light to those who wish to see, and left sufficient obscurity to perplex those who love the darkness." And this, we add, is the only kind and degree of light that God could give, and at the same time respect the freedom and anticipate the voluntary worship of man; and here it is that we discover the admirable adaptation of Christian evidence to bring him under the power of the Gospel.

But this conviction will be strengthened if we furthermore consider the *variety* which characterizes that evidence. Christian evidence is nearly as various as the sources of certainty in human knowledge. These sources are commonly reckoned to be consciousness, reasoning, and external testimony. Now, on most subjects, the authority of any one of these, clearly expressed, is deemed sufficient to establish credibility. Usually men are satisfied with the voice of consciousness, or with the logical result of a course of reasoning; but when to both these are united the affirmation of the senses and the seals of external testimony, to doubt is considered absurd. But it is just such a union of separate authorities, each conclusive in its own sphere, that Christianity presents to the human mind to certify its heavenly origin. Indifferent as to where the proof begins, it is willing to appear before any of these tribunals, and is equally ready to appeal first to external testimony, or to consciousness, or to the senses, or to reasoning, and to vindicate its pretensions on any or on all these grounds. It calls upon consciousness, and that informs us that Christianity harmonizes with its intuitive convictions, and uncovers to the light its profoundest depths. It calls upon the understanding—the faculty of formal argumentation—and that testifies to the logical congruity of its parts, as well as to the antecedent probability of its structure and mission. It calls upon analogy: that principle which carries us around

the many-sided majesty and power of God. And it assures us that the Christian religion is the culmination of that wisdom whose lower forms are seen in all the complicated arrangements of matter and spirit. And, with the same confidence, it enters the domain of history, and challenges the sharpest art of scepticism to detect a flaw in its claim as the supreme fact and controlling force of the world's record. And then, to all this variety of appeal, Christianity superadds the visible sanction of miracles, and the most startling verifications of prophecy.

Thus does our holy faith answer the highest conditions of certainty in human knowledge; covering at once, and with a sublime fulness, the whole ground of consciousness, analogy, logic, and history. Thus does the Christian religion, by the quality and variety of the evidence it offers—a quality fitted to a being possessed of freedom and set upon a career of trial—a variety so rich as to satisfy every demand of the intellect—prove its ability to bring under its power the whole nature of man. By these, moreover, does it assert its profound relationship to human intelligence, and, generally, the absolute rationality of its structure and method of operation; and, doing this, answers, from the sphere of action rather than that of abstract thought, the leading question proposed by the Philosophy of Religion.

We now proceed to the *second* branch of our argument, which was to show that Christianity is adapted not only to bring man under its influence, but to keep him there, both as an individual and as a race. It is easy to conceive how a system of thought or discipline might by authority, or tradition, or naked force, deeply affect the character of man, and yet be unable to retain him permanently in its grasp; and it is equally easy to see how a system might take hold of the individual, and yet be impotent to perpetuate its hold on the race. Hence it is of some importance to

note the fitness of Christianity in this particular. We have not to ask whether Christianity can do this, for the experience of nearly nineteen centuries has made such a question needless. We have only to inquire how it does it—in virtue of what functions and properties. And we may remark that in no other aspect does it tower so loftily above all schemes and devices of the world for a similar end; in none is the hand of God so visibly made bare as its author and finisher. Who can resist the conclusion to which so many other considerations point, when he sees every other mode of culture—every other plan for elevating our race—sharing the vicissitudes of mankind, decaying as they decay, and dying as they die: while he sees this system of faith and discipline perpetually renewing its youth, and with it the youth of the race, amid the ruins of nations and the ashes of buried civilizations—dealing with change in all its shapes and issues, itself unchanged—mating with earthly corruption, itself without soil or blemish—feeding our wasted arteries with life, itself unexhausted—kindling on the graves of empire the flame of a personal immortality, and stamping the symbols of hope on human despair as it crawls away from battle-fields and scenes of prostrate liberty and vanquished knowledge—we say who that sees this (and to see it we have only to look about us), can resist the conclusion that it was the Ruler of heaven and earth, and He only, that wove the sinews and knit the joints of such a scheme of faith and discipline? If He did not, then let it be told who did. Let the inferior intelligence, the lower force, be named, that has so arched the ages with glory, and spread over human graves, and toils, and woes, such a bow of promise. Let the builder of such a structure come forth and take the crown, and accept the love and adoration of uncounted millions of beneficiaries.

But if Christianity so grasps the human race, and so interweaves itself as a disciplinary power with the whole

series of human generations; in virtue of what attributes and functions does it do it? We say then, first, that it is able to do this work because of the form it assumes when taken into the soul as a personal attribute. It then passes into the form of a regenerating and sanctifying power—a form which instinctively guards itself from corruption, and carefully transmits its own peculiar type. It neither parts with anything of its own, nor accepts anything not its own, but goes on from heart to heart, and from age to age, unaltered and unalterable. Christianity, when taken into the soul as a personal experience, is neither a sentiment, nor a knowledge, nor a belief only, but essentially an act, an energy, a force; and hence, as distinguished from mere feeling, or knowing, or believing, requires of the soul the union of its inward states and tempers with outward conduct, or, in other words, the blending of the contemplative with the active, the abstract with the practical, the spiritual with the visible. Now from the disturbance, or rather rupture, of the relations which Christianity has established between these issues of the soul and the world of positive action, have sprung the worst assailants of the Gospel life. We refer to superstition, quietism, and fanaticism. “To rely on outward acts or outward rites, or things severed from the inward and spiritual reality, is superstition, which is the idolatry of the senses. To trust to the inward and spiritual sundered from action is quietism, which is the idolatry of the intellect, giving us meditations for charities, and dreams for virtues. While, on the other hand, to assume the feelings as the true and only exponents of spiritual realities, is fanaticism, the idolatry of inward frames and tempers.”* Superstition leaves us only the skeleton of religion, quietism thins it away to a shadow, fanaticism burns it to ashes.

* Coleridge’s “Scriptural Character of the Church of England.”

Now behold how admirably the Gospel life maintains its equipoise against these disturbing forces. It binds together, as mutual aids and correctives, the outward and the inward, the external rite or action with the spiritual frame. Ever pointing to a hidden power beneath all its visibilities of administration, it also manifests itself through, and demands the use of, symbols, services, and sacraments. It saves itself from evaporating into quietism or fanaticism, by giving to the inward a fixed and visible medium of communication with the outward, consisting of the active duties of the Christian profession, and of established symbols and authorized memorials. It saves itself, too, with equal success, from petrifying into the gross sensuousness of superstition, by drawing a broad distinction between form and spirit, the sign and the thing signified.

Now there are many sorts of life besides the Gospel life. There is the life of the senses, the life of the imagination, the life of the intellect; but none of them has its own unalterable type, nor the power to perpetuate an uncorrupted germ. They are well nigh what circumstances make them. It is only the gospel life, whose centre and source are the God-man Christ Jesus, that has this fixed type—this indestructible virtue—this quick resiliency from corruption—this power to cast out alien elements, and transmit itself through individuals and through generations. It is, as it were, a fire of God's own kindling, and this attribute shows it. Nor will He suffer it to be quenched. Here and there along the centuries, and around the margin of this great human camp, it may, now and then, burn dimly; or, like the binnacle of a sinking ship, flash out on the devouring sea only an occasional and spasmodic glare; yet, somewhere on this earth, its purging flame shall be evermore bursting out on the pathway of man.

We remark, in the second place, that the Christian reli-

gion is adapted to deal with mankind as a race, because it is, in a peculiar sense, a religion of light. It alone, of all systems, gives a rational account of the origin and destiny of man, and sets forth the tests and elements of real progress. It knocks at the door of his narrow abode, built on the quicksands of guesses and speculations, and calling him out on the broad earth, and under the open sky, tells him who made this universal frame, and why it was made, and what shall be its end. "Come to me," is its language, "and I will give you a knowledge beyond the reach of crucibles and telescopes; I will explain to you your own wants and wishes, and put an end to toils that yield only the agony of doubt and the pain of disappointment." Thus Christianity endears itself to the race, and grasps its mind. It comes as a superior knowledge, a higher and surer truth, and, as such, bends charitably over its errors, assuring it of so much that is essential to its peace, that the race cannot afford to part with it. The race, as a whole, yearns to be educated, to be lifted to higher grades of knowledge, and to see its manifold powers more thoroughly developed; but, to be educated, in this broad sense, there must be a school and a teacher. And well mankind know, from bitter experience, that to expel or to ignore Christianity, is to shut the doors of the one and the mouth of the other. A disagreeable teacher is sometimes endured for his gifts. And so, though the Gospel were repulsive in all other respects, human nature is selfish enough to cling to it, because it is a lamp in a dark place, a key to a world of enigmas.

But, if Christianity grasps the continuous mind of the race because it is a Religion of Light, so, in the third place, we say it grasps the heart of the race, because it is a Religion of Love. That it is a religion of love is a necessary inference from its being a religion of light: for, whatever man may

do, God never sends light into the soul without heat, nor plants there a thought which, if it be suffered to ripen, will not also become a feeling. Emphatically is this true of Christianity, which is the wisdom of God. It is as mighty to warm the heart as it is to illuminate the intellect. It is no mere bundle of rays, no mere shining surface flashing here and there an idle radiance, but rather a central flame, self-feeding and self-diffusing, warming every soul it enters with the glow of God's infinite love. Once seated in the hearts of enemies, it makes them friends. Discord cannot abide it, selfishness cannot resist it; never yet did malice create a desert or a ruin, in the hearts of men, which Christian love could not people with living forms. Christianity is a religion of love, because, where it works, it never fails to make love the supreme affection of the soul. It lifts man above himself to God, and out of himself to his fellow : and hence it spontaneously asserts itself not only as a worship of somewhat higher than man, but also in the sympathies of brotherhood. By these sympathies, which, though a part of human nature, are yet ever a dormant part save when animated by the inspirations of a supernatural order, the Christian religion has softened the asperities, and to some extent levelled the inequalities of modern civilization ; bringing down the rich to mate with the poor ; lifting up the slave to a fellowship of destiny and privilege with the master ; lighting the torch of knowledge in the haunts of ignorance and superstition ; spreading the wisdom of the wise downward through all the groping millions ; teaching all classes their duties and their rights, and that the doing of the former is the only sure method of winning the latter ; following in the wake of trade and war, of disease and want and misfortune, to gather up their victims for the solace of a divine charity. Strange would it be if a system of faith productive of such works, and operating through

such sympathies, should not grasp the common heart of man and hold it through all vicissitudes! Extreme would be that infatuation which would induce the race to give up the only assuager of its woes, and the only source of its serenest, noblest joys!

We have spoken of the Christian religion as spontaneously developing into an associative life, as gathering together in the bonds of paternal sympathy and on the basis of an organized spiritual fellowship, all sorts and conditions of mankind. We would now proceed to name a fourth reason why that religion is competent to deal with the race as a series of generations. That reason is to be found in the fact that it offers itself to man as an institution having an effective power for guidance and discipline. Christianity objectively viewed, contains thought, life, precepts, and principles, but *is* an institution—an embodied power. It is so as truly as it is a revelation. It was not in its origin, as some would have us believe, a mere dogma floating about the world and slowly elaborating its body out of historic accidents; nor a mere string of virtues and charities awaiting a chance consolidation into a life and visible discipline. It started not only as a message, but as a kingdom set up among men to declare a message. It began with the functions of active governance. It came forth from the hands of its founder a Church complete in its attributes: with a worship, with sacraments and a ministry to administer them, and with all needful discipline. “Repent ye,” was the cry of the Forerunner in the wilderness, for not only a Gospel from Heaven, but “the Kingdom of Heaven, is at hand.” Miraculous powers were given to introduce the Gospel; a visible church was ordained to continue it. Once introduced, and it became a kingdom not only in virtue of an ordinance of God, but also by the necessity of self-preservation.

In this respect how marked its eminence over all other faiths and disciplines which have attempted the religious training of mankind. They, without an exception, exhibit the patched and halting process by which they were rounded out from the human mind ; and by the rude mechanism of their instituted forms betray their origin from social fortuities, or stale enactments, or private interests.

Christianity alone evinces that its structure as an institution was the spontaneous product of its own organic life. Now this circumstance secures to it a peculiar fitness for dealing with the human race. This will appear if we look, for a moment, at some of the features of Christianity regarded as a kingdom or institution. Take, for instance, its universality ; and by this we mean not only the capacity, but the tendency to become universal. We find both in the very nature of the Catholicity claimed by the kingdom of Christ. In virtue of this note the Church is so constituted that all its parts cohere in each other, and so cohere that all are the equal recipients of a common life. It is a society whose centre is to be found wherever it manifests its life, and exerts its lawful powers. It matters not what latitude, or climate, or race—wherever the cross is truly planted and a Christian fellowship properly organized, there is the Church's centre. Thence stream forth, like so many radii, its multitudinous gifts and prerogatives.

And here we cross the track of that huge lie of Popery which gravely tells us that all the parts of the Church cohere not in each other, but in one part ; that they are all dead except they act in subordination to that one part ; that the church's centre is the Pope, and that it shifts with his wanderings and accidents. A strange catholicity that, which thus ties the centre of God's spiritual empire to the fortunes of a mortal man : of a man, too, whose double office as a religious head and a civil ruler engages him in a per-

petual scramble after temporal goods, and renders him the patron of usurpations, and tyrannies, and cabinet intrigues! A strange catholicity of temper, that—to lift up one branch of Christ's mystical body through the degrading vassalage of all the rest! But we only name this bastard theory of Catholic visibility, as the naming of a great truth suggests its base counterfeit.

It was our remark, that this attribute of universality eminently adapted Christianity as a kingdom to deal with the whole race. It does so, because it qualifies it to deal with man under all varieties of character, condition, and culture, and under all forms of social and political life. And in this regard we must not fail to note the transcendent superiority of the Christian system over every other that has ever assumed to be the religious guide of our nature. If we examine the systems of the best of the ancients, we find them all alike characterized by intense localism and nationality. The Greek religion could find no home beyond the bounds of Greece. It was a lifeless thing away from the social usages and forms of art by which it was fed, and to which it in turn ministered. The Roman could not cross the bounds of the empire. Roman law, Roman literature, and Roman policy followed the victorious eagle, and grafted themselves on the vanquished. Not so the religion. Stationary and torpid, with no internal strivings for diffusion, it hung for centuries around the same altars, shut up to a round of idle pomp and superstitious observance. If we look to the lower and grosser faiths of the world, we find the same features. Africa's faith can breathe only amid barbarism and darkness. The Asiatic systems are all tied up to their birthplaces. Hindooism cannot travel away from the Ganges, nor create a discipleship except amid the heats of a sultry climate. And Mohammedanism, though in some respects a higher

religion, lives and flourishes only by the inspirations of violent conquest; peace is its paralysis, enterprise and social activity its death.

It is, then, in the broad and vital sense suggested by this contrast, that we affirm the peculiar adaptation of the Christian system to deal with mankind as a race, to triumph over the hindrances interposed by geographical position, or national temperament, or peculiarities of political organization, and to gather together as one people, and on the basis of a redeemed and regenerate nature, all the dispersed tribes of the world. Superior to all other faiths in the capacity to include all men, it is also their superior in the tendency to include them. Its power in this direction is neither hidden nor dormant, but ever visible and active. Its every disciple is a teacher and a missionary. Its life is the life of propagation. It gathers strength by expansion, and fulness by what it gives. This, in contradistinction to all societies and polities of human device, is the exclusive property of the kingdom of Christ. If, now, we add to this property of Christianity as a kingdom, its admirable combination of permanence with flexibility—its capacity to be as the solid rock amid the mutations of the world, and at the same time to move through and control them with the pervasive force and silent invisibility of the atmosphere; and if, moreover, we reflect on the entireness and depth with which, through its doctrine, ritual, and fellowship, it grasps the intellect, the imagination, and the affections; we shall have before us some of the elements of that conviction which assures us of the supernatural adaptation of the Christian scheme to the wants of man, regarded not only as an individual, but as a series of generations.

We shall now proceed to the *third* and last branch of our subject, namely, the suitableness of Christianity to elevate and transform the human character. We shall

only indicate, without discussing, the several points suggested by this part of our theme. Among the more striking adaptations of the Gospel in this direction, we observe, first, that it is fitted to elevate and expand the mind, because it encourages rational inquiry in every department of thought, and accepts, as illustrative of, and in harmony with, its own teaching, the doctrines of a true philosophy; because it emancipates the reason from the bondage of the senses; because of the sacredness it attaches to truth, and the thoughtful activity it promotes by the grandeur and importance of the questions it proposes for contemplation.

We observe, second, that it is adapted to the affections, because it fortifies them against the trials of the present life, by certifying the existence of a future state, and leading them up out of earthly vicissitudes to an object infinite, perfect, and unchangeable.

We remark, third, that the Gospel is adapted to the will and the conscience, because it provides for the pardon of sin, and effectively aids them in the struggle in which it calls them to engage; because of the power of its sanctions, and the infinite value of the interests it puts at stake; and, finally, for the reason that its teachings, on nearly all subjects of human concernment, are by facts and manifestations in action, as in the personal history of our Lord, and not by general rules and abstract propositions.

Such, then, is the Christian religion in its power to reach the soul through the medium of rational conviction, and to exhaust the sources of proof; such in its power to arrest human intelligence and satisfy it that it came from God; such in its power to develop and train the intellect and will of humanity—a power springing out of the life it generates, out of the light it spreads, out of the charity it fosters, and out of the guidance and discipline supplied by positive institutions.

Such, in other words, is the religion we profess, in its power of attestation, diffusion, and perpetuation. What a structure! so perfect in finish, yet so stupendous in magnitude, so complicated yet so balanced, so special in its operation upon individual man, yet so boundless in its reach over the moral interests of the race; its summit and foundation shadowed by mystery, yet the whole, from top to bottom, luminous with spiritual light. Wonderful are all God's works, and in wisdom has he made them all; but neither life, nor nature, nor humanity, nor the universe, can show aught like unto this.

And now, as we stand on the height to which this course of thought has lifted us (and it is only one avenue out of a hundred leading to the same elevation), how like a thing of weakness crawl at our feet the most formidable shapes of unbelief; how like a pigmy's straw appears its boasted enginery of assault; how puerile its efforts in piling up against the base of that everlasting rock, as if to overthrow it, fossils and skeletons, and chronological tables, and supposed discoveries in ethnology and physiology! Infidelity, whatever its polish, acuteness, and erudition, we fear not, for any damage it may do the Faith in itself considered; but only for the "mad woe" it breeds in the souls it conquers. Like the assassin, it ever courts the unguarded spot in the object of assault. Like the assassin, it strikes, regardless of the value of the life it destroys. Like the assassin, it walks with masked visage and stealthy tread; and its wages are the price of blood. Powerful only when concealed, its exposure is its defeat. In the sunlight, a harmless monster which a child might sport with, it wields in the dark a scorpion's sting. The last and worst issue of a fallen nature, it is also the most stupendous of sins; for it is the deliberate embodiment, in the forms of the intellect, of the moral alienation from truth of a depraved heart.

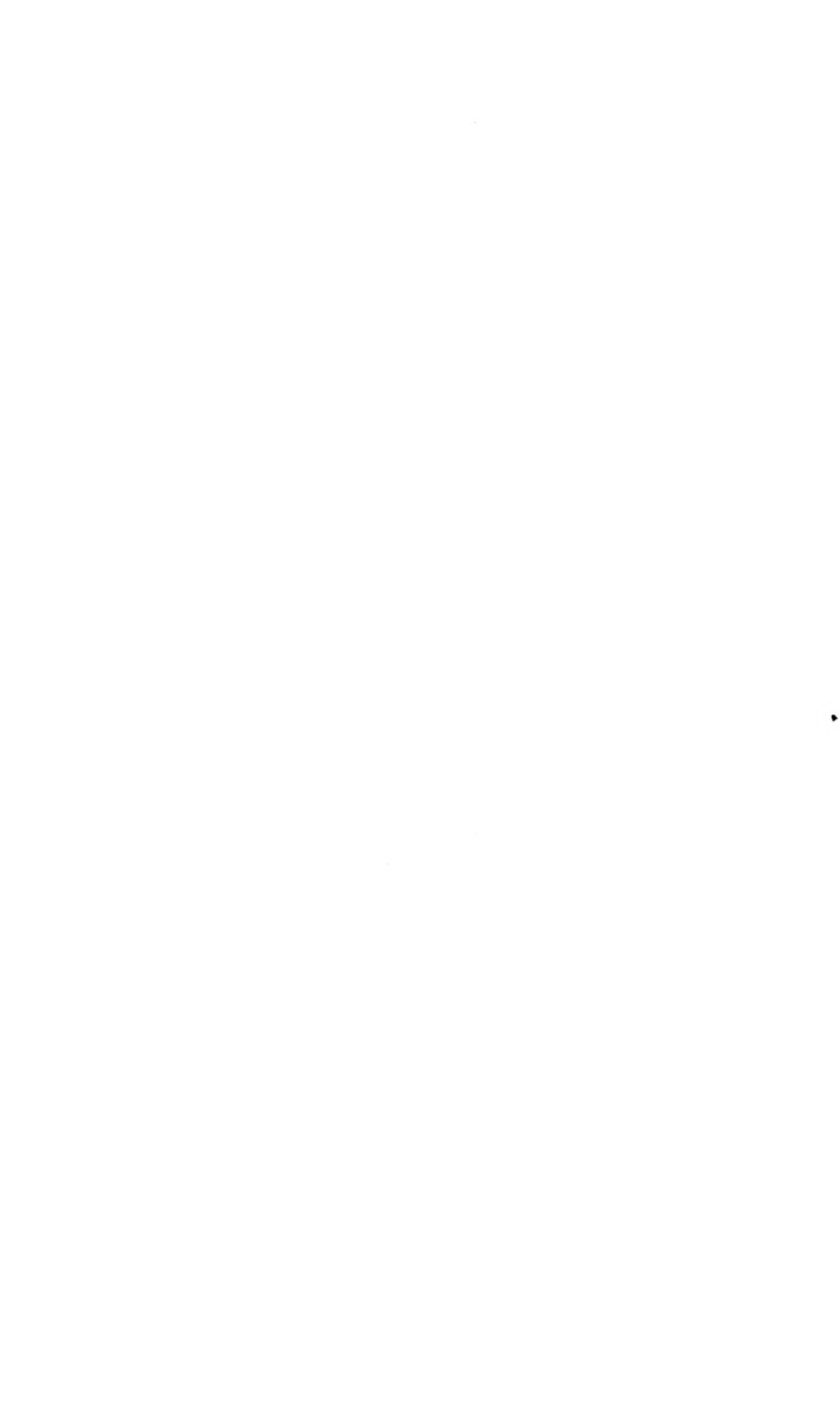
As such let us brand it with reprobation ; let us battle for every inch of the ground over which it would pass. Let the soul that receives it remember that it thereby tears up the seminal principle of its greatness, and sunders itself from the foundations of truth and order. Let the people that wink at it, or fondle it, remember that every thread woven into its texture is one added to their shroud. For nothing is surer than that every step away from God or from Christianity, which is the wisdom of God, on the part of individuals or nations, is a step toward destruction.

As for the coming fortunes of the Gospel, they are easily told. Its felt and demonstrated might to cleanse and transform the world ; its potent mastery over human hopes and sorrows ; its marvellous adaptation to the deepest wants of man, must ever render it to human history “what the Nile is to Egypt, springing from hidden sources above it, flowing through its entire length, and, while ever holding on its own heaven-descended course to a wider ocean, sending off unnumbered tributaries through all the channels of life, to give impulse and advancement to all that contributes to the happiness and perfection of society.”

Philosophical Scepticism.

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II.

PHILOSOPHICAL SCEPTICISM.

SCEPTICISM is a disease peculiar to civilization and civilized life; a disease which marks the old age of nations. It is really foreign to the tone and temper of a young and growing people. The founders of great empires always labour in faith: in the might of their convictions, too strong ever to be wiped out, they fulfil their appointed task. Their aims are always positive; they live to build up, not to destroy: to plant, to tend, not to root out and neglect the interests of mankind.

Want of faith can fall only upon a people whose mission is ended: who have nothing to look forward to: when their toils and battles have been accomplished: when luxury and amusement characterize the life and form the main objects of the public ambition. In the hour of danger, when Hannibal threatened the existence itself of Rome, the Senate, in solemn session, passed a vote of thanks to Varro, their general, because, amid the fears of the time, he did not despair of the commonwealth. Yet, in the course of some hundreds of years, that Senate would hasten to pay obsequious court and to decree divine honours to the vilest creatures ever born. Consider what changes must have taken place in the habits, the pursuits, the life of the Roman, before the old Senate, in its sublime confidence, could be transformed into a fawning, imbecile conclave, trembling at the frown of some brutal master, and dependent for its

existence upon his arbitrary whims. It shows you the difference between the youth and old age of a nation: between a nation in the period of its belief, and of its unbelief.

You may ask, if unbelief be characteristic of nations in their old age, can it find a home among us at present? It certainly should not be found here, yet, nevertheless, it is flourishing in the midst of us, and that, too, with considerable vigour. This would seem to contradict the statement previously made. For we are a young race: our commerce, our agriculture, our enterprises of every description reveal an immense energy, and intelligence full of promise for the future. We feel our strength, and are not slow in proclaiming it. But we present this curious anomaly, that, while in all our material interests we are free, independent, young, and fresh, in our intellectual and spiritual relations we depend almost entirely upon the old world. We have no schools of thought, of letters, which may in just propriety of speech be called our own. Our opinions are based upon European training. European thought encounters us everywhere, especially in matters connected with theology and philosophy. It forms and moulds the speculative mind of the country, and, through that, the popular mind itself. But, as is well known, the thought of Europe—its speculative philosophy—is largely unbelieving: its unbelief is carried over into and lodged within the mind and heart of this country. The spectacle presented, then, is not that of youth seated at the feet of a venerable, ripened wisdom, but rather led by a worn-out, hollow, unbelieving, despairing worldliness—by an atheistic temper, to which all faith, whether in God or man, seems impossible. This is, I repeat, the spectacle presented now upon our soil. The unbelief of worn-out empires is working its way into the heart of this youthful commonwealth, with this difference, which only heightens the anomalous character of the whole phe-

nomenon, viz., that, while in Europe it is not confined to Christianity simply, but comprehends politics and political institutions, our people have enthusiastic faith in our democratic system, but are unbelieving as yet only in the sphere of religion and theology.

It is necessary, now, that we form a clear notion of scepticism. It is in itself the negation of belief: it is not misbelief, not false faith as distinguished from real faith, but the absence of all faith, whether true or false. In its largest sense the word scepticism denotes circumspection. The mind looks around upon all subjects, without accepting or rejecting them. It keeps itself in a state of suspense over against them. It satisfies itself with a consideration of all objections and perplexities, but refuses any effort to remove them. It is an everlasting No—an interrogation—a doubt; the negation of thought under its positive forms.

Such a state of mind is, to say the least, unhealthy. We must judge of it by falling back at last upon the unwavering, ineradicable convictions of humanity at large. Man does not believe, will not allow, that the end of all thought is a mere negation; that the world of truth is revealed to the thinking powers only to awaken their questionings; that truths, which concern the power of man here and his blessedness hereafter, must stand in mute, inexpressive mystery over against the mind, forbidding any near access, throwing no light, ever present only as enigmas or riddles. We must form our estimate of the proper functions and destiny of the mind by and from the sure instincts of the mind itself. And these carry the mind onward in utter defiance of the conclusions of scepticism. Scepticism, being at war thus with the universal aspirations of humanity, must be a disease, an abnormal posture of the mind itself. Hence, the question arises, is this disease seated primarily in the head or in the heart, in the understanding or in the

will? For myself, I have no hesitation in answering this question: I feel compelled to explain it by reference to the condition of the will or heart. For, first, the course of modern thought shows us that thought must end in the way of mere negation, unless the will, our principle of personality, be felt as an essential factor in the sphere of speculation, and, secondly, the history of modern scepticism shows also that it takes its rise only when a lethargy rests upon the spiritual life of the nation or nations.

1. And first, to consider the observation—*that thought must end in the way of mere negation, unless the will, our principle of personality, be felt as an essential factor in the sphere of speculation.*

He who occupies his mind with the causes of things, finds himself drawn to a consideration of an original, absolute cause; the fountain and energizing source of all individual, finite life. Reason, by an inherent law of its own processes, mounts to, or rather finds at hand, the idea of this absolute cause. It cannot rest in the notion of many causes, or of secondary causes: it must seek the first, must acknowledge it. But philosophically, as has been remarked by Fr. Schlegel, “this conception of a first cause is of a totally undecided character, and admits of a double, indeed of varied significations, and everything lies in the choice between these various significations.” It must be obvious to you that the conception of a first cause is one thing, and the character or attributes given to this first cause quite another. Reason in itself is indifferent in the matter, so far as any attributes are concerned, distinct from the idea of immanent power. Of itself, and by itself, reason may, in fact, following its own bent, take into consideration simply and solely the idea of power and substance. The one absolute cause may appear to it essentially under this form. For, manifestly, whether God be a person or a power, can be a question of no

moment to the speculative reason in itself, which looks simply for the ground of things under its abstract form, and not otherwise. If, then, it do not occupy itself, so far as its own undisturbed processes are concerned, with the idea of God as a person, but rather as power and cause, the result of all discursive thinking upon the subject must end in a negation. Conclusions must be reached utterly at war with the convictions, the aspirations, the wants of man as a moral, accountable, spiritual being; for a personal God will be set aside or ignored, and with Him all the moral life of humanity, which is based upon and flows from the relation subsisting between the accountable creature and the law-giving, truth-revealing Creator. Modern speculative thought, under some of its highest as well as deepest forms, verifies this; it has reached this goal, and stands in clear hostility to the ethical, spiritual view of life, which the wants and conscious convictions of the soul require.

According, then, to my former remark, everything depends upon the choice made at the outset of thought, between the varied significations attached to the conception of the first original cause of things. Shall we or shall we not make, from the starting point, any provision for the moral, spiritual convictions of human nature? Shall we or shall we not allow the fact of our personality to have its weight by clothing God with the attributes of personality, by considering Him as the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and not merely as infinite substance, without will, without personality, after the fashion of Pantheism? But to this result we must come if we ignore the necessities of the moral nature; if we overlook the elements of our personality, and think as if we were mere thinking creatures, without hopes and fears, without duties and responsibilities, without yearnings and aspirations

toward God as a holy person. We must, I repeat, be driven to logical conclusions utterly at variance with the deepest convictions of our being. How then shall we act in this case? One of the two opposing powers must conquer. Shall we adopt the one-sided conclusions of the speculative faculty, to the loss of our moral being? or shall we stand firmly upon the latter, in the full conviction that thought must be radically vicious, which would leave the soul without a God whom it could love and worship? Humanity cries out against thought which shall end in the gloom of featureless abstractions. It is not the kind of thought which can carry the life of man onward and upward; which can give stimulus to his powers of mind and heart. It girdles him round about with infinite nothing.

Of course I must be understood to speak here of Pantheism only in so far as it is destructive—destructive of the moral life of man, of his hopes and joys; and in this view of it, as pure scepticism, by withdrawing the grounds of moral obligation, without any capacity to annihilate the moral being of man; in a word, as the negative of his spiritual instincts. I have alluded to it as authenticating the assertion that thought ends in the way of negation, unless the principle of our personality be admitted as an essential factor in the sphere of speculation.

The truth of this will appear further by an illustration which may be deemed more simple. The common sense of Christendom finds in man's consciousness full and sufficient proof of the independent life of the soul. Suppose now an anatomist, paying no attention to his own consciousness, resolved that, unless he can, by ocular demonstration, prove this, he will not believe it. We know what the result will be; we know he cannot find the mind in the brain; he will find simply and only material substance.

He may be viewed already as committed to a foregone conclusion. The knife cannot detect the soul. Is there, therefore, nothing of us but body? Is our frame, with all its wonderful organization, and powers, and functions, our all? If any anatomist say, yes, he is flying in the teeth of the consciousness of the soul itself—he is destroying its life; he, too, is at war with the wants and convictions of the soul. He, likewise, believes nothing; is afloat as a spiritual being upon a shoreless sea. The skill and intelligence with which he handles the dissecting knife, the strong emotions of his heart when confronted with human suffering, his delight in the knowledge of human goodness, his abhorrence of crime and tyranny, the ebb and flow of his being in the presence of spiritual beauty—all these are but the properties and sensations of flesh and blood, because he cannot find the soul; because he accepts as realities only whatsoever is comprehended within the region of sense.

It would seem, therefore, that the character, as well as issues of thought, depends upon the presence and power of a certain somewhat in the thinker, which indeed underlies, and is antecedent to, all thought. Its entire worth, for himself and for the world, depends upon the recognition of the moral and spiritual wants of the soul. It must be based upon, and proceed from, a conviction of their reality. Nothing else can save the mind, either from universal scepticism, or from positive misbelief. Now scepticism utterly sets aside this requisition. It overlooks or denies the real ethical constitution of man. It makes it of no account. And here we are in full hostility with it. For we say to the sceptic, what right have you to overlook in your supercilious style the convictions of our moral man; to turn a deaf ear to the longings of the soul after God; to refuse all exertion to satisfy its cravings after

Him, whom it must love if it shall ever carry with it a sense of blessedness? Obviously, it is an arbitrary proceeding to cast aside the demands of a portion of our being, and to make everything of only another portion, and then to avow that all has been done. For the purposes of science the wants of the spirit are as fully authoritative as those of the mind, taken by itself simply. And the reality of that authority is attested in the negations and ghastly shadows which the neglect of it upon the part of a thinker is sure to beget. But scepticism disappears when the spiritual necessities of the soul find a full recognition; therefore we may say that in the neglect of these it has its being; it lives in so far as the soul dies. It says, perhaps I should love God, perhaps not; perhaps I am immortal, perhaps not; perhaps God is a personal being, perhaps not. It has no yes!

And here lies the difference between the doubter and the sceptic. The doubter may, if I be allowed the expression, have faith and yet no belief. A strong conviction may dwell in him that God has not willed His creatures to spend their days in ignorance of Him, to wander about hopelessly in quest of truths, which, when seen, are mute; or, on the other hand, to live as the beasts that perish. He believes there is a truth, which he may know. Aspiration mounts upward upon the wings of faith. Holy reverence for the undiscovered realities glows within the heart. It can worship: yet from certain peculiarities of mind, from the bias given it by education, from the books it may have studied, from these and kindred causes, the mind may be perplexed, may question and find no immediate response; and thus be a sojourner amidst uncertainties, not knowing its position, not able to perceive what it needs. Still this, which is the lot of almost every earnest thinker during some portion of his life, will finally pass away, if the deeper,

underlying principle and power continue to make itself felt.

The sceptic, however, has no such feeling. No sacred faith beams within him; no hope cheers his spirit. Vague, blank, unending, unsatisfying hesitation concerning all things spiritual has seized him. Turn as he may, he beholds some insurmountable difficulty: think as he will, he arrives at the same powerless conclusion. And of all this we can be well assured, before his unbelief finds an utterance.

In the next place, in further proof that scepticism, as a disease, is seated in the will or heart, we may refer to the history of modern scepticism itself. Under what circumstances has it made itself felt? Not in the days of the Luthers, the Calvins, the Hookers, nor the Bossuets of modern Europe; not when the nations, under the sway of great ideas, have "mewed their mighty strength," nor when they have battled with idols and corruptions of the truth of God; not when churches and senate chambers have rung with the eloquence which faith inspires; not when self-sacrificing pastors have fed the flocks of God committed to their care—not then and so. Under far different circumstances from these has it done its work. Its stammering voice has been heard, when a shallow philosophy and a dead orthodoxy have ruled the public mind; when John Locke was the oracle in England to whom all aspirants after philosophic culture turned; when David Hume, who carried onward the notions of Locke to their destructive issues, became the great light in which not only England, but France, and through France a portion of Germany also rejoiced; when the churches of Europe held the form of the truth in a frigid, formal way, not seeking to penetrate its inner meaning; when the pulpits sent forth weekly messages, in the shape of pointless generalizations concern-

ing right conduct, or else of bald, formal, doctrinal statement; when the Church of England was so far blinded as to cast forth John Wesley—in a word, when all spiritual life was stagnant, and a living faith driven from the sanctuary. It was then that doubt spread; and uttered itself, now in sophistries, now in blasphemies, now in sentimentalities, and now in despairing cries. The mind of Europe was sick and its heart faint. It had no faith—no resting-place for the sole of its foot. In England scepticism assumed the form of a cold, godless sneer: in France it assisted at the orgies of a blasphemous court, was seated in the temples of God, and finally presided over the fires and fury of the Revolution: in Germany it grew melancholy and despairing, until at last it was seized at the heart and strangled under its old form by a master mind, who thought he had reared upon its ruins a fabric for all time. Hume and Voltaire were dethroned; the sceptre departed from them; but scepticism itself was not rooted out from the heart of Europe. With all sympathy I say it, the mystery of the Tower of Babel has been acted over again during these fifty years past. Men of extraordinary gifts and culture have attempted to rear absolute systems, deep as death, high as Heaven: one has followed another only to be overthrown, causing confusion and contention, calling forth dismay ending in bewilderment. They have toiled with positive aims, they have reached negative results. At this moment no one man controls the mind of Europe; no philosophic system can be said to be in power. Precious fragments lie strewed about the ground, destined indeed to live. But the mind of Europe is still borne on the dark waves of uncertainty. The demon of unrest still drives it onward: it wanders, not, alas! as a pilgrim, but like an exile.

Enough has been said, I trust, to make it apparent now

that scepticism, as a disease, is seated primarily in the will or heart; that it is grounded in a denial, not indeed of any of the laws of thought as such, but of the wants and fixed characteristics of the ethical and spiritual portion of our being; that it flourishes when and where these are overlooked. Thus far we have been concerned with it only generally. It is necessary now that we view it more closely in its details, in the particular phenomena brought to light by it.

What form may it be said to have assumed now in the sphere of theology? This is the question most serious in its issues for us and for our children. In all Protestant countries, then, where, of course, the Bible is formally acknowledged as the sole authoritative rule of faith and practice, scepticism comes forward with a denial of this acknowledgment. It denies that the Holy Scriptures are of any binding authority upon the mind and heart of the world, and this denial is supported by a searching critique of the Bible itself. So far, then, as the principle of authority is concerned, it meets it in this way. In Roman Catholic countries, it would meet that principle by denying the divine institution of the church. Whether, therefore, the church, or the Scriptures, or both, combined after the Anglican method, be the formal symbol whereby the objective authority of Christianity is acknowledged, it receives a flat denial. But this denial does not rest so much upon the insufficiency of each or of all these to be an authority, as upon the antecedent ground that there can be no authoritative power of any sort in the sphere of faith. To fight against the idea of authority may not answer its purposes: it therefore attacks the particular symbols which bring that idea to a particular form—the symbols whereby it is authenticated and embodied.

It has, then, assailed the Bible in the particular of its

credibility; arguing that, inasmuch as miracles are contrary to experience, any record of miraculous transactions must be false, and therefore cannot be of any validity to the mind and conscience of man. This is the substance of Hume's theory, which we need not notice here; for the ground of controversy has changed since his day, and we meet with a denial of the authority of the Scriptures under a new and more imposing form. A much more learned and acute criticism than was ever dreamed of by English or French deists, has made itself heard through Europe; it has penetrated the very forests of the New World. True, it starts from a certain theory gathered not from, but formed antecedently to, a study of the Bible itself. It holds strictly to the impossibility of a supernatural revelation, to the impossibility of a miracle. It holds, still farther, that the phases and forms of religion, are but the product of the natural processes through which humanity is passing from one stage of its development to another.

Armed thus with certain foregone conclusions, which themselves are the negation of all authority inhering in the Bible, it has applied itself to a study of it. Obviously, then, all statements of supernatural fact or revelation, of miracle and heavenly sign, are denied—denied flatly; are viewed as pure myths, embodying the religious conceptions of the age in which they were written. They are either fictions invented to give pith and point to a notion of the writer, or have been inserted as true by the writers, who were not sufficiently critical to distinguish between actual fact and legend. In this way all the miracles in the Bible are disposed of. By this process it is placed in the same category with the primitive traditions of the rude, barbaric, dawning ages of the world. A parallel criticism is applied to the New Testament. All that is deemed an interference with the natural order of the world is summarily rejected:

all that remains is accepted as true, in so far as it corresponds with the present opinions of this criticism; is set aside in so far as it is opposed to them. Nevertheless, it claims that it recognises the moral grandeur of Prophet, of Evangelist, of Apostle. It is by no means churlish of its praises: it does not weigh its words in fear that by chance it may allow too much weight to the Bible. It will not refuse to speak even of the inspiration of an Isaiah or of a Paul. It grows quite indignant over the sneers with which English and French sceptics treat the Holy Book; it cannot ridicule what has been deemed sacred by saints and wise men; it will drink of the fountains of Scripture, and seek even to comprehend such of its truths as, in its judgment, are veritable reflections of the One Eternal Reason. No one book, it will readily acknowledge, contains so much of the life and power of the Religion of the Absolute as this. Yet, in the mean while, it will not hesitate utterly to set aside all the statements in the Bible of supernatural fact; at one fell swoop, by one foregone conclusion, it clears the ground of every semblance of a supernatural revelation, at least to its own satisfaction. David is inspired, so also is Homer; Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Paul, and John are teachers of the world, but not in any higher sense than Plato and Aristotle. Of course this criticism destroys, in so far as it is accepted, all the *differentia* of Christianity, strips it of its essential, historical facts, and then tells men to retain the ideas which underlie or are embodied in the sacred legends and mythical creations of Holy Writ. No matter how positive its forms of expression, they contemplate and reach simply a negative result—the denial of Christianity as an objective, historical revelation; and with such denial, comes inevitably incertitude, not only in the way of thought, but of spiritual

action. It takes from the soul the only foundation upon which piety can rest, and then calls upon men to live piously.

It is essentially under this form that the latest unbelief has come to light. The way in which it handles the details of Scripture, this particular miracle or that, does not concern us here. It becomes us to see and to know that its rejection of the truth and reality of the record of supernatural fact rests upon, and proceeds from, an antecedent, speculative principle, viz., that an objective revelation and a miracle are both equally impossible. Manifestly, the controversy with unbelief cannot rest upon the letter of Scripture; it must be met antecedently to a study of the Scripture; since the statements of Scripture have neither produced unbelief, nor afford any shadow of hope that unbelief can be removed by it. The letter of Scripture is of authority only to those who recognise that authority: its meanings cannot settle a struggle between two parties, one of whom accepts, while the other refuses them. We may employ Scripture in our contest with errorists, within the pale of a common faith: but, mark it well, brethren, unbelief, under its present form, totally rejects Scripture as an authority for the mind and conscience; and at once, therefore, dismisses any appeal to it which faith may make; and, with that rejection, it ignores the entire supernatural life and order of the Gospel. It presents itself clearly to our minds, then, as a denial of Christianity in its historic sense, grounded on the antecedent theory of the impossibility of a revelation. It matters little whether, in the hands of Strauss, this unbelief take a Pantheistic form, or in the hands of Francis William Newman a Theistic form; it destroys everything like certitude and leaves the soul without a revealed Father. When Mr.

Newman says, with reference to the soul's immortality, "Confidence thus there is none, and aspiration is her (the soul's) highest state;" he affords a striking instance of the highest posture the soul may reach without an historic belief. He aspires to immortality, but he cannot say that he is immortal; he hopes he shall not be annihilated, but he knows not. Perhaps he shall live—perhaps! but he cannot, when doubt assails him, stand on those words of the blessed Lord, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

In its completed forms, such scepticism is a manifest overlooking of the wants and yearnings of the soul: a search, not for concrete fact, corresponding to inward necessities, but only for such abstract forms as may satisfy the mind, considered in itself: ending in notions and denials, and leaving the heart to its fate! It may hunger and thirst; it may stretch forth its hands and cry after the living God; but the heavens are voiceless! the Father Almighty is not revealed!

I need not dwell here upon the evils and dangers to be apprehended from a growth of scepticism in our midst. It has indeed a charm for the young, for the well educated, for the adventurous of thought and fancy. Clad in brilliant rhetoric, adorned with learning, pursuing its way with a certain beauty of motion, it seems an angel of light. For it promises men a solution of their anxious questionings; it undertakes to open to their mind the mysteries of heaven and earth; it offers them dominion and power; it holds out the hope of destroying all superstition and of securing the sway of righteousness and judgment and mercy upon the earth. But, in the mean while, the real work of destruction is going on. The cultivated become supercilious and selfish, having for ever at their tongues' end the formulas of their favourite teachers, with no holy calm in the sanc-

tuary of the soul; never dreaming of sacrifice, ignorant of the life of love: the uncultivated become fierce in their hatred of the rich and favoured, abominable and gross in their pleasures; denying the very being of the great God, and living as the beasts that perish. Of its effects, I repeat, I cannot now speak. It becomes us rather to consider the way in which it must be met.

Certainly it cannot be by abstractions. Bald affirmations over against denials are not needed now; are not at all adequate to the exigencies of the crisis towards which the church is now driven. We may expose the falsities and sophistries of unbelief; may drive it from its strongholds, strip it of its fair disguises, clear away the obstructions which serve it as barricades in all its revolutionary and destructive movements; we may even do all this, and yet unbelief itself may flourish, may break forth in ever-changing forms. Our labour will be useless. For scepticism is essentially a spirit, not simply an intellectual form of unbelief. It furnishes incontestable evidence of disease at the heart of a people, and we must meet it as such, else we fail to counteract it. And how then are we to do battle with it? *By the positive, living power of faith.*

The day has come when we must be against unbelief what the early disciples were; what the people of God have ever been, in times when the cause of truth has triumphed in their hands. We must show forth Christ Jesus as the real, not merely nominal, mediator between God and man. In such an hour of distraction and strife, this will meet our wants and the wants of the world, and this only. For it is utterly hopeless, and betrays an ignorance of the pass to which men are now brought, to suppose that God's cause can triumph in this day, by the mere repetition of the forms of divine truth. The world is rebelling against

those forms; we must translate them into action. Our Incarnate Lord must be our real Sovereign and Head; the foundation of our hope, the well-spring of our joy. This is and must ever be the keystone in that arch of Christian evidence which no man can break. It is positive: it moulds the spirit into a positive form; endues the church with the attributes of Christ's real body, so that she will speak His truth, will do His work, and will move among men as a divine presence. The logic of action is resistless. Thin metaphysics, cavilling niceties disappear from before it. Its tread is that of a victorious power: its thought reaches its goal, like an arrow winged by a hand and directed by an eye that never misses its mark. And this is the logic of the spirit—action! action! action!

Let me not be misunderstood, however. I do not hold that we must rush blindly into action because it is necessary. It must be action such as Christ wills, not such as our self-will might dictate; action grounded in love and faith; the action of a God-inspired, a heaven-taught faith, such as saints and holy men have ever exhibited; the product of living thought and pious feeling. This alone can overthrow unbelief and master the heart of the world, by creating the conviction that the wants, the aspirations, the blessedness of this poor human race are bound up in Christ our Lord; and that unbelief is powerless to throw light into the darkness of time or eternity, to infuse warmth and life into humanity.

Standing upon this ground, our way will be clear to deal with scepticism in its actual forms. To meet this end, we must have an intellectual ministry, as well as one distinguished for its piety. And by an intellectual ministry I mean one which shall have, besides book-learning, a mind trained to familiarity with the thought of the age; brought

up to the full measure of participation in that thought; able to battle with it if false, able to roll it onward if true; able to detect its worth as well as its defects. This, then, will lead us to the truth, will enable the advocates of the faith to be just and candid, to move onward in the true spirit. By these means we shall transmit the legacy, bequeathed to us, unto our children, unimpaired, unbroken, in its rich and life-giving fulness.

On Miracles.

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III.

ON MIRACLES.

He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot, with graveclothes.—JOHN, II. 43.

NO one, at all familiar with the history of opinions, can fail to observe how the great questions, which involve the chief speculative difficulties in moral and religious truth, after certain intervals, return, as if subject to some law of periodic revolution, back upon the human mind, and demand renewed examination. We find ourselves still under the necessity of discussing, as if doubtful, questions agitated and regarded as settled ages ago; and, in different lands, Christian scholars are at this moment engaged in subjecting to fresh and severe investigation, truths held by our fathers as for ever established among the very principles of morals and religion. Not many years have passed since the impression seemed general, that we might quietly repose upon the idea that the great battles with infidelity had been fought through, and a final victory gained. We saw, gathered together in the arsenals of the church, such trophies, won by the giants of former days, and such mighty weapons laid up in store, that it was almost imagined the very sight would intimidate similar enemies from ever renewing the attack. The battles with infidelity, like the battles of the Reformation, had been fought, and for ever ended!

But alarming experience has proved the folly and danger

of such exultation, and compelled the conviction that the great questions at issue in such subjects lie deep in the tendencies of the human mind; so that though the elements of strife may be lulled upon the surface, the depths may again at any period be moved, and that, as in practical religious character the price of safety is watchfulness at all times against every enemy of our salvation, so in the church there must be eternal vigilance against even those old errors which have been often overthrown, but by which many who felt strong in the faith have been taken captive, even while proclaiming their superiority to danger.

It is doubtless true that each age adds some new element to such questions; that by renewed and earnest inquiry some advance is made; and that afterwards the mind rests upon a firmer foundation, even if only because this has been again thoroughly tried, and found secure, the traditional assurance of its strength being confirmed by actual experience, gained by new danger met and overcome. These remarks apply, with unqualified force, to the subject now to be discussed—that of “Miracles, with especial reference to objections most current at the present day.”

The attacks now made upon the evidence of Christianity derived from miracles, involve no new principles, though they gain additional effect from the setting in upon the age of new currents of knowledge, and the prevalence of new habits of thought. Old objections take a new form and dress, and borrow enough of prevailing truth to preserve the disguise. The works of a noted English infidel,* written early in the last century, contain the essential features in the system of one† of the most prominent advocates of infidel principles in our own country at the present day. That system is, in brief, as follows: “Christianity, stripped

* Tindal.

† Theodore Parker.

of the additions which mistake, policy, rhetorical artifice, the circumstances of time, the errors of interpreters, have made it, is *absolute religion*—the internal revelation of the law of nature in the hearts of men—and therefore needs no *external* evidence or authority to commend it.”

And the distinctive idea of the work of Strauss, who, with such an array of learning, strives to eliminate from the Gospel narratives everything regarded as miraculous, was the principal point in the argument of another well-known English infidel* of the last century, and the substantial answer to both was then written in these words: “By the same way of management, by arbitrary suppositions, and adding or altering circumstances as he judged proper, he might have proved the most authentic accounts in the Greek and Roman history to be false and incredible. He might, at the same rate of argument, have undertaken to prove that there was no such person as Jesus Christ, or his apostles, or that they were only allegorical persons, and that Christianity was never planted or propagated in the world at all.”†

The obvious, natural, legitimate mode of treating the subject of miracles, as a part of the Christian evidences, is that by way of historical testimony,—to establish their reality as facts. This has often been done, with such accumulated testimony as to have produced the general conviction that the sceptical reasoning, which aims to destroy its force, would unsettle belief in every wonderful event of history, and even the foundation of all belief in the past. Experience also brings constant proofs, that a theory in the mind, whether relating to nature, or testimony, or language, may practically neutralize the effect of any degree of testimony, though in itself absolutely conclusive. Theories or

* Woolston.

† Leland's View of Deistical Writers.

states of the mind may so pre-occupy it, and affect its whole tone, as apparently to compel the rejection of all external proofs not in accordance with them.

Some of these theories, bearing upon the evidence of miracles, I propose to consider.

1. There is a theory, very ancient, and yet also very common at the present day, which, by *a priori* reasoning in regard to the *laws of nature* and the *attributes of God*, concludes against all miracles as *impossible*, and therefore, from the nature of the case, incapable of proof. This is the source of much of the sceptical spirit of the day. By this *summary* process all examination of external evidence is superseded. If a miracle be impossible, the attempt to prove its reality is like beating the air.

The supporters of this theory are bound, by a rigid theoretic necessity, to *get rid* of the evidences of miracles in every way possible, and they therefore bring to bear upon them all kinds and processes of reasoning.

It is affirmed, that all the experience we have of the natural world indicates the uniform constant operation of natural laws; that by these all the movements of the natural world are governed with unerring exactness, as if nature, in all its parts, and through the endless variety of its processes, were some vast and infinitely intricate machine, moving by certain fixed, unchangeable laws. Now, it must be allowed, that miracles pre-suppose laws of nature, so called, and their uniform operation, within certain limits; and they imply, and actually are, a suspension of, or variation from, the strict uniformity of those laws. But the whole question, whether miracles be inconsistent with the laws which constitute the order of the natural world, depends upon what the laws of nature are, and upon what determines and controls their operation. Our knowledge of these laws is derived from a generalization of the facts in nature.

Every age adds to this knowledge, as the field of nature is explored more widely and minutely, and the results subjected to more searching analysis. From time to time, laws, which had been supposed to be ultimate, are found to be limited, controlled by, and, as it were, included in, other laws of higher and more general operation.

But the knowledge of these laws is simply the result of a generalization by the human mind, made from a wide and exact observation of the facts of nature. We know not in any case that the suspension of, or variation from, the uniform operation of a certain law, may not be in obedience to some higher law, and in perfect harmony with the great design of the whole system of nature. Moreover, when we have deduced from observation of the uniform connexion between certain facts, related as antecedents and consequents, the reality of any law of nature, it is still obvious that all our knowledge is limited to what we have observed, that is, merely the uniformity. That uniform relation we call a law of nature. But of the actual ground or cause of the uniformity, we have made no discovery. The fact only we know. Nothing in nature gives the slightest evidence, that the succession of facts, from which the law was deduced, is the result of any inherent or efficient power in nature, by which the facts were made so to succeed each other. We speak indeed of the laws of nature, as if inherent in nature. But this mode of speech is merely an accommodation to popular impressions. Strictly speaking, it rests upon no actual knowledge. On the contrary, the more searching the examination of nature, and the changes in it, the stronger does the conclusion become, that nothing like an inherent, efficient power to produce those changes, can be discovered in nature. The substance, thus ever changing, is, in itself, passive, inert, and unintelligent. The changes indicate active, intelligent

power. Those changes must, therefore, be governed by a power separate from, and above nature. The law which the changes indicate is not any real power in the substance changing, by which the successive facts observed are linked together by a necessary connexion; but is simply the law or rule by which a real power above nature operates in and through it. "Forasmuch as the works of nature are no less exact, than if she did both behold and study how to express some absolute shape or mirror always present before her; yea, such dexterity and skill appeareth, that no intellectual creature in the world were able by capacity to do that which nature doth without capacity and knowledge; it cannot be, but nature hath some director of infinite knowledge to guide her in all her ways. Who is the guide of nature, but only the God of nature? Those things which nature is said to do, are by Divine art profound, using nature as an instrument; nor is there any such art or knowledge divine in nature herself working, but in the guide of nature's work."*

"The grandest discovery ever made in natural philosophy, was that of the law of gravity, which opens such a view of our planetary system that it looks like something Divine. But the author of the discovery was perfectly aware that he discovered no real cause, but only the law or rule, according to which the unknown cause operates. The laws of nature are the rules according to which the effects are produced, but there must be a cause which operates according to those rules. Upon the theatre of nature we see innumerable effects, which require an agent endowed with active power."† The same truth is still more emphatically expressed by another and later writer of high authority. "Whence comes its (nature's) countless changes, its

* Hooker. *Eccles. Pol.* Book 1, Sec. 3.

† Reid. "Active Powers"—*Essay* 1, Ch. 6.

incessant activity and life? It is no answer to this question to say, that events constantly succeed each other in regular sequence, or even to give a name to that order, and call it law, or *physical* cause. You cannot believe, you cannot even imagine, that any one of these events takes place without a real cause, an efficient energy, without which it were not.*

The laws of nature are, then, simply the laws by which the great Author and Ruler of nature works after the counsel of his own will. That will, directed by infinite wisdom, established and sustained those laws. They may be suspended, if consistent with the eternal counsel of God in creation. The alleged impossibility of such an event cannot be inferred from any uniformity in the order of nature, since this is directly dependent upon the free and sovereign will of God. It can be maintained only by proving that a miracle is inconsistent with the *final purpose of God in the laws of nature*. And who can pretend to such knowledge of this as will enable him to pronounce a miracle impossible? Who can even affirm, with knowledge, that the temporary suspension of a natural law, so called, may not be in perfect accordance with the Divine plan which governed the Almighty in the creation of the world? God is immutable and omniscient, and will fulfil His eternal purpose in creation. But that purpose is inscrutable; and no man can know that a miracle was not in the original counsel of God, and in accordance with the eternal plan, which all natural laws subserve. It may have been ordained for a higher end than the strict uniformity of the order of nature could compass. The laws of nature may be under that law which rendered the miracle necessary.

The final cause of the *uniformity* itself of the movements

* Bowen. Lowell Lectures, p. 136.

of the natural world, may be the great moral ends, which the miraculous *suspension* of that uniformity is designed, and alone adapted, to secure. Some of these we can discover by observation of the effects of miracles. They are a most impressive teacher, more so than even the uniform order of nature, that there is a great *personal cause*, above nature, who sits upon the throne of the universe. They are a powerful check upon that tendency to rely upon second causes, and to forget God and His providence, to which man is prone to yield even *through his experience of the uniformity* of the order of nature.

A divine interposition, arresting the movements of nature, like that of the deluge, or the destruction of the cities of the plain; or that on Carmel, when the authority of Elijah was confirmed, and the priests of Baal confounded; or that when Daniel was saved from the power of the flames, has an effect in convincing men of the being and power, justice and retributive judgment of God, even, perhaps, greater than all his glory, seen in the uniform succession of natural events.

Let it not be said, then, that a miracle is impossible, because it is a violation of the laws of nature, or of the divine immutability. It is a *violation* of no law, natural or moral. A suspension of, or deviation from, the strict uniformity of the order of the divine operation in nature, it is, in obedience to the divine will, to fulfil the great, original law of His eternal purpose.

2. The objection to miracles, on the ground of the strict uniformity of the order of nature, is made under another form, which derives great influence from circumstances of the age. Such have been the amazing advances of science, and the results developed in its progress; so many things have been brought to light by its researches, which preceding generations would have pronounced impossible,

and yet which are evidently in perfect harmony with the known laws of nature; that the impression is awakened or confirmed in many minds, disposed to *sceptical doubt*, that even the miracles recorded in the Scriptures may be traced to some natural law yet to be discovered. Nature also is full of wonders which obey no discoverable law, and which minds of a *credulous tendency* are inclined to regard as supernatural. The most astounding facts, from time to time, come under the observation of honest and discerning men, for which, it is affirmed, no experience of the laws of nature will account. Shall we, therefore, regard these as miraculous; or not rather distrust our knowledge and sagacity, and patiently wait, till time, giving opportunity for wider, closer, and more scientific observation, shall disclose the mystery, and reduce these wonderful facts to some law, either already known, or yet to be ascertained? Certainly so, will be the reply. Why, then, may not the same be said of all things regarded as miraculous?

Such is a mode of reasoning now common, or gradually taking form in many minds. Its influence is felt in weakening the effect of the appeal to miracles, as evidence of the divine authority of Christianity. It tends either to confirm that credulity, which destroys the value of the miracle, as a distinctive and appropriate evidence of revelation, or that scepticism which doubts its reality.

Now, all such reasoning rests upon the facts of our ignorance of the limits of what is possible within the laws of nature, and of the inexplicable character of many things which come under observation. But, does it follow that, because I am ignorant of the utmost limits of the possible within the domain of natural laws, and whether certain observed facts are also within their range, that there are no instances in which it may be perfectly evident that those limits are exceeded, and no facts which I can be sure

cannot be accounted for by any natural law. We may be doubtful in many cases, and yet have reason for entire certainty in others. There may be such a vast and palpable disproportion between an effect, and any result of the operation of natural laws, as to be a perfect proof of a miraculous work. It may be doubtful to many, whether the magicians of Egypt, who attempted counter works to those of Moses, were permitted to perform actual miracles; but it can never be doubted by any who allow the fact, that when Moses stretched out his rod, and all the waters in Egypt—in their streams, their rivers, their ponds, their pools—thereupon became blood, that a law of nature was suspended, and a change was produced, which was not in accordance with any such law; or that, when he stretched his hand towards heaven, and from that moment, for three successive days, thick darkness covered all the land of Egypt, the effect was miraculous. The laws of nature will indeed account for many most wonderful things, which for a long period remained unexplained; and many strange and mysterious events may now occur, for which no principle of science will account; and it still be as true now, as it was eighteen centuries ago, that if a person, unquestionably dead, should be restored to life, there would be a miracle of divine power. No suggestion about the marvels of science, the possible effects of occult powers of nature, or of the strange and unaccountable agencies at work among men, could in the least degree invalidate the conclusion, that there is a wide and palpable distinction between all such effects, and the restoration of a dead man to life.

The same observation may be applied to the case of many other miracles of the Saviour; such as restoring sight to those born blind, and hearing to the deaf; the vigour and freshness of health to the paralytics and lepers,

by a word or a touch; or the feeding of five thousand with five loaves and two small fishes, so that all had enough, and yet twelve baskets of fragments remained. If these facts be admitted, the certainty of their miraculous nature can be affected by no reasoning such as we have described.

The miracles attributed to our blessed Saviour, with few exceptions, do so manifestly transcend all effects produced in accordance with natural laws; are so entirely disconnected with any suspicious circumstances or processes of art; as to make the widest distinction between them, and any cases in which the power, to which a peculiar and wonderful effect must be attributed, is doubtful, or incapable of being ascertained.

3. There is another point, which, in this connexion, should receive attention. Because miracles are possible, and consistent with the divine perfections, and have been performed to fulfil the purposes of divine wisdom and mercy in creation and redemption, it cannot, therefore, be assumed that there is an obligation *even to examine* every claim, which may be made to the possession of supernatural powers, on the ground of the production of inexplicable works. If such were the case, every accomplished juggler, or person deeply versed in the mysteries of natural science, might demand the solemn and continued attention of mankind in general, until the secret power at work could be detected. While, upon such a supposition, miracles would be utterly valueless as a means of conviction, because of their supposed frequency; so, also, such works are undeserving attention—as presenting claim to supernatural origin—on account of their comparatively trivial and unimportant ends. As the stability of nature is the appointment of a God of infinite perfections, and upon it most momentous interests of mankind depend, that very trust in the power and providence of God, which leads to

the conviction of the possibility of miracles, and their effect, also assures us, that a suspension of the order of nature would be permitted only for the greatest and most elevated ends, and when the necessity for such interposition was exceedingly urgent. It is an argument of great weight—preparatory to the direct examination of testimony in favour of the reality of the miracles of Christianity—that it can be shown that the end, professedly designed by them, was *worthy of the infinite God*, and of importance and necessity to mankind, beyond the power of language to express; that, when we contemplate the fruitless speculations of the wisest of mankind, in regard to those great subjects most closely connected with the character and all the highest hopes of man, and the actual state of deep darkness and guilt which, before Christ came, covered the whole world, we can show the supreme necessity of a revelation from God by direct interposition. That miracles were, in themselves, worthy of their divine author, and for an end in harmony with his perfections, and essential to the happiness and holiness of mankind, can be made evident. And when the contrary of all this is apparent in regard to works which may demand attention as supernatural, the *absence* of any great and worthy end, renders it alike the dictate of common sense and reverence for God, to withhold attention from such claims.

4. Attention will now be directed to another theory, by which much of the scepticism of the day in regard to miracles is fostered, and by which both their reality and value are discredited. The most prominent advocate* of this theory in this country, who takes the title of a Christian minister, while he disparages and ridicules the positive institutions of the Gospel, thus presents, in substance, his system:—

* Theodore Parker.

“All that is true in Christianity is a truth of absolute religion. The truths of absolute religion are easily known, for they are matters of intuition. Absolute religion answers exactly to the religious sentiment in man. This religion is eternally true, before revelation, after revelation. Jesus fell back on the moral and religious sentiment in man, uttered their oracles as the Infinite spoke through them, taught absolute religion, absolute morality, nothing less, nothing more. Thus, Christianity being eternally true, is a matter of direct and positive knowledge, dependent on no outward testimony. Its great doctrines and precepts were known long before Christ. The only authority of Christianity is its truth, and miracles can add nothing to it.”

Such is a theory which has great influence with many. It has no claim to originality, but is a repetition of very old infidel reasoning. It has, however, coloured the writings of some who do not doubt or deny the fact of miracles, but who hold them to be of little importance in connexion with religious truth.

In all the statement which we have given there is no denial of Christianity, according to the writer's view of it. He professes to be a Christian. But Christianity, according to his theory, is just so much of the teaching of the New Testament as corresponds with his standard of absolute religion. The ideal standard is made the measure of the actual truth in Christianity. So much of the Saviour's teaching as he finds accordant with his ideal of absolute religion is true, and no more. The only authority of Christ and his Gospel is, then, to be sought in the intuitive sentiment or judgment of mankind.

But how do I know that those sentiments, or ideas, which I regard as intuitively determined to be absolute truth, are indeed the intuitive sentiments of man? How

can any man, "sunk in ignorance, precipitated in sin," arrive at the assurance that his supposed intuitive impressions in regard to the most elevated moral and spiritual truth are in reality such?

If man were perfectly pure and holy, his mind and heart unbiassed and uncorrupted by sin, the case might be different. But that his actual state, as weak and unholy, corrupted throughout by sin, should not distort his moral vision, is impossible. The idea of what is called absolute religion, supposes *at least* a being who retains the original moral sentiments of human nature in their purity. Will the author of that statement maintain that a Hottentot, or a Thug, who practises habitually the vilest vices, and commits, without a scruple, the most awful crimes, even with a conviction of duty, can or does know, by intuition, absolute moral and religious truth, that which makes up Christianity in his view? Is it possible, in view of the actual state of such a being, that he should form the conception of any such perfect standard of absolute truth? Perhaps there may remain in all men some vague, indistinct impression of the being of one God. But can it be maintained, that the intuitive impressions of all men reveal to them the sublime *moral perfections* of that Being whom they are to love and worship? Can the Hottentot, in his degraded, besotted state, know, by an intuitive process, the nature of God, and the worship acceptable to Him? Will not his conception of the Divine Being be affected by his own moral state?

The sentiment or idea is of a moral kind, and must partake of the defects of the moral vision. Can his intuitive impression of the perfections of God, and that of a Christian, correspond, and if not, how can it accord with absolute truth? It is an observation as true as it is common, that the infidel borrows his ideas of God and right morals from

the Gospel, and then uses them to weaken its authority. He cannot rightly argue that, because he finds such ideas in his mind, they are therefore intuitive, and absolutely self-evident to mankind.

There are, I repeat, probably in all men, some general, indistinct impressions of an intelligent power above nature. But whether that power be one personal being or many; and what moral attributes belong to such being or beings; unaided human reason has never made known to man. Now the love and worship of any being must be attended with entirely different moral effects, according to the different impressions entertained of his nature, character, and will. And the very love and worship of a being may be the source of increased moral corruption. With great truth it has been observed, "we are so accustomed to contemplate God as invested with all those paternal and perfect moral attributes with which Christianity clothes Him; to see Him in that attitude of holy sovereignty and paternal goodness in which it represents Him; that this perfect combination of moral attributes, this completeness of moral character in the Sovereign of the universe, such that we should as soon think of adding to infinite space as of adding anything to its perfection, seems as a matter of course, and we do not remember how difficult it must have been to carry out the fragmentary revelation of nature to its absolute completeness, and to combine with these tremendous natural attributes, shadowed forth in the agencies of nature, the benignity and mercy, the justice and compassion, that form the character of our Father in heaven.

We forget the distressing perplexity in which the greatest and best men of antiquity were respecting the moral attributes of God, and the important fact that they never so conceived of Him as to make *the love of God a duty*.*

* President Hopkins.

Again, it may be true that there is implanted deeply in the being of man, an instinctive tendency pointing to a life beyond the grave; and some faint, obscure, uncertain answer may have been given by natural reason to the inquiry of the patriarch Job, "If a man die shall he live again?" But what that life would be, whether remembrance and conscious identity would remain, whether the soul would not migrate into some other body, whether there would be a just recompense and retribution, were questions which could not be and were not answered by natural reason. Yet, again, it is a universal fact, that all men are sinners, and of this, a state of their own being, they *are* conscious. But how man, thus conscious of sin and guilt, could be redeemed from their power; how he could be absolved, if there were a just God and Judge of the world; consciousness did not, and could not determine. The evidence of this is seen in the monstrous superstitions and abominations of all heathen systems of religion.

Abstract reasoning upon such questions is of little value to show what man might know of absolute religious truth.

The only inquiry of practical moment is, what *were* the results arrived at upon such subjects before Christianity prevailed, and what *are* the results now where it is not known, nor its influence in any degree felt. We need not dwell upon the overwhelming evidence drawn from the state of the ancient pagan world, and that of heathen people of the present day, to show how heaven-wide the ideas of the Divine Being, of the perfections of His nature, of the worship due to Him, of His will, of the immortality of man, of the means of securing the Divine favour, and freedom from the dominion and consequences of sin, were, and, under such circumstances, still are, from the sublime truths of Christianity.

As to the means of redemption, the pagan world was in

utter darkness. The minds of men, disturbed by conscious guilt and superstitious fear, saw no way of escape from the bondage of sin, and of securing the pardon of a righteous God.

Even if some of the greatest sages, whose wisdom enlightened some pagan lands, rose, in favoured moments, to lofty speculations upon the nature of God, the immortality of the soul, and the principles of moral duty, yet as they arrived at no conviction of certainty, and were destitute of all means of transforming power, so were they incapable of authenticating the truths upon which they speculated to the world, of establishing them in the general mind and heart. Even Socrates, at death, spoke of immortality with uncertain, hypothetical expressions; and enjoined upon his friends, as a dying request, to sacrifice a cock to *Æsculapius*. Such is the highest certainty of the human mind upon absolute religion, without revelation, which renders the latter needless, and authorizes unbelief, while beholding the truth under the full and glorious effulgence of the Sun of Righteousness, vainly to boast that all the light which illumines the path of man proceeds from the taper of human reason! Surely we need no higher evidence of the necessity of a Divine revelation; and of some positive means of establishing its truths, with a certainty above that which fallible, depraved human nature can inspire, and upon a foundation which its doubts, its cavils, and its blind presumption can never destroy.

Let our thoughts now be given to other views of the subject, which tend more directly to confirm and elevate our faith in "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." While the evidence of the particular miraculous works, connected with the origin of Christianity, depends upon historical testimony, which loses some effect by the lapse of time, there are other miracles whose influence is con-

firmed by time—is greater now than in the Apostolic age—and which probably produce upon the minds of men in general the most powerful impression in convincing them of the divine origin of our holy religion. These may be called the *permanent, standing miracles* of the Gospel. Christianity, in its *very being*, involves miracles. 1. The Saviour, in his own *nature and person*, was a miracle, surpassing all others in majesty, such as made all the other miracles performed by him seem only the *natural* works of such a being.

Infidelity, by its subtle and ingenious objections, may disturb the faith of some in particular branches of the external proof of the miraculous origin of Christianity; but, it can never deprive man of the *character* of Christ, recorded in the Gospels, and this bears to every truthful mind the impress of a divine reality. That character will *remain* in the Christian world for ever, receiving the homage of the wisest, and greatest, and holiest men of all ages and lands, as the image of absolute perfection. And as the reality was supernatural, so the conception and invention of such a character, under the circumstances which it implies, exceed the possible bounds of the human mind. Upon this point there is a singular agreement of testimony. Infidel philosophers, worldly men of the greatest acknowledged sagacity and power of mind, and the most devoted Christians, here unite in one consenting voice. Rousseau spoke with contempt of the pretence of comparison of the life and death of Soerates—the greatest of pagan sages—with those of the Son of God; and declared, that if Soerates lived and died like a philosopher, the life and death of Jesus Christ were those of a God.

The memorable words of Napoleon were, “I know man, and I tell you that Jesus Christ was not a man.” Before Jesus Christ, the greatest sages, statesmen, lawgivers, phi-

losophers, and moralists, as well as the most exalted saints, bow in reverence and awe, and, with one consent, confess the superhuman majesty and loveliness of his character. Here, then, independent of any particular miracles ascribed to the Saviour, is a great, comprehensive, moral miracle, around which all the others may be said to revolve, always before our view, and impressing us with the conviction that Christianity was not of human or finite origin.

The same impression is confirmed, when we contemplate the teaching, the claims and design of the Saviour. When we consider the circumstances of his earthly birth, among an obscure people, separated by a wall of bitter and inveterate prejudice from the world—looking with pity and contempt upon all others, as shut out from the favour of heaven; when we consider, also, His condition—that of being despised among His own brethren, trained in no human learning, and having for His chosen associates the poor and illiterate—and then dwell upon the doctrines and precepts of Jesus, we are compelled to believe that these can be accounted for by nothing less than their superhuman origin. A system of practical morality, springing from one all-comprehensive principle, to which no approach can be found in any preceding teaching of man; in which every duty, every spiritual grace, even every refined and elevated emotion or sympathy, meet for any possible relation, condition, or circumstance of life, are included; a system changing essentially the highest actual moral standard of the world, by condemning, as vices or wrongs, what were regarded as exalted virtues, and placing in the rank of virtues or graces, what were regarded as weaknesses or defects; a system rising above all local and transient influences—alike adapted for all persons, in all stations, in all countries, and through all ages; which realizes all that the human mind imagines, or the heart and conscience demand, as

perfect in morals, ever rising higher than the utmost practical approach to perfection of character ever attained by individuals in their striving after exalted virtue—such a system carries with it the evidence that it did not originate with man. It is, in itself, another great moral miracle, which alone has convinced the greatest among men that the religion of Jesus is supernatural and divine.

It has, indeed, often been affirmed by infidels, that there is no one of the precepts of Christ which cannot be found in some pagan writer of a preceding age. But, even if this were not a gratuitous assertion, without proof, it would deserve little weight as an attempt to show the possible human origin of the Christian system of morals. All the colours of the rainbow may be seen separate in nature; but who but the infinite God could combine them in a beam of light, or blend them in the glorious arch which spans the heavens? Not less does the perfect combination of all virtues and graces, in their due bearing and proportion, which we find in the Gospel of Christ, require an elevation, comprehensiveness, and vastness of moral conception which bear the stamp of divinity.

The claims and design of the Saviour unite in producing the same impression. He claimed to be a perfect, sinless teacher of moral and spiritual truth—the Guide, the Lord, and Saviour—the life, light, and hope of all the world. He calls upon all men to believe in and honour Him, even as they believe in and honour the Father. He demands their love and obedience as His right. “What,* it has been observed, would have been thought of Socrates or Plato, if they had not merely taught mankind, but if they and their disciples had set up a claim that they should be loved by the whole human race with an affection exceeding

* Hopkins’ Lowell Lectures.

that of kindred?" He claimed to be the judge of all men, with power to pardon or condemn, and forewarned men of the hour when they should be gathered before His throne. He formed the design of establishing a universal kingdom, with dominion over the hearts and lives of men for ever; a kingdom to be introduced by instruments regarded as weak and contemptible by men, to be extended in the face of all the temporal powers of the world, and solely by moral and spiritual weapons.

Such designs—conceived under such circumstances—in their grandeur, in sublime superiority to all the schemes ever devised by earthly ambition, in the calm and simple majesty with which they were declared, together with the meek and lowly character, and humble station of their author, bear convincing evidence of their superhuman origin. And the result harmonizes with the design. The kingdom of Christ prevailed; changed the institutions, customs, manners, and spirit of the civilized world; and is still everywhere exerting the power which, like leaven, is, in the hope of all, to leaven the whole lump of worldliness and sin. This evidence—that of an existing Christianity, advancing over the world against such mighty obstacles, and against all earthly passions—is appealed to by several of the fathers of the church, as conclusive of its miraculous origin. And their declaration was echoed by the great early poet of Italy, in the "*Divina Commedia*."*

* Cary's translation :

"That all the world, said I, should have been turned
To Christian, and no miraele been wrought,
Would in itself be such a miracle,
The rest were not an hundredth part so great."

Se 'l mondo si rivolse al eristianesimo,
Diss' io, senza miracoli, quest' uno
E tal che gli altri non sono 'l centesimo.

But all these evidences that the Gospel of Christ is not of this world, receive the highest confirmation from personal experience of its power in transforming the soul, in which it is received with living faith. The source of unbelief is the heart, and only when "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." When within his own soul man feels the power of the Gospel and spirit of his Saviour, and Christ has become unto him "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"—the remedy for every spiritual disease, the relief for every spiritual want of the sinner—the source of the highest consolation, and of the only abiding hope—when he knows that through Him he is delivered from the burden of guilt and sin which is intolerable—death being deprived of its sting, and the "dark valley" illumined by that hope which is "full of immortality"—then only will all doubts for ever vanish away, and his assurance become perfect, that the foundation on which he stands, by faith, is sure as the "Rock of Ages," firm as the being and promises of God.

Immutability of Natural Laws.

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IV.

IMMUTABILITY OF NATURAL LAWS.

"All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation;" (the scoffer said).—2 PETER, III. 4.

I ASK your attention, this evening, to a few reflections on a feature in the science and literature of our day, which can hardly have escaped your notice, but which seems to me to merit more serious consideration than it usually receives. I allude to the disposition, always prevalent, but especially so now, to refer every phenomenon and every event, whether it be material or moral, to causes purely natural. I allude to that assumption—which will be found at the bottom of some of the ablest modern works, not only in Physics and Mental Philosophy, but also in Natural Theology—the assumption that the order and constancy, the uniformity in respect to properties, which characterizes *objects*, and the uniformity in respect to sequences which characterizes *events*, is absolute and unvarying, being liable to no interruption, either from man in the exercise of a self-determining power, or from God in the exercise of a miraculous or Providential agency. It is a theory of necessity, much bolder and broader than that of Edwards, or of others of the same school. That great master of metaphysics, while he denied the power of man to interfere with the established relation between cause and effect, whether such relation be material or mental, whether it connect physical forces with their proper effects, or moral

motives with their consequent volitions, never called in question the fact that God may interpose to suspend or set aside these relations. Not so with the philosophers to whom we now refer. They insist on a constancy in nature which seems to be hardly consistent with any intelligible theory, either of miracles or of a superintending Providence, while it would appear to leave no room for liberty in man, or for evil, physical or moral, in the universe. Thus, some of our scientific geologists find no vestige on the earth's surface of any great catastrophes, read on her monumental piles of no supernatural disturbance, nor, indeed, of any change or physical revolution in times past, but such as can be resolved into the operation of causes now existing. By other naturalists this exclusion of the Supernatural is extended to plants and animals, and their origin is ascribed to the spontaneous development of certain properties and laws inherent in inorganic matter; while some of the most eminent mathematicians and philosophers of Europe, in works too expressly devoted to a vindication of the doctrines of Natural Theology, have attempted to include even the miracles recorded in Scripture in the same category—as results of natural laws of vast range and comprehensiveness. For example, in his work, entitled the Ninth Bridgewater Treatise, Mr. Babbage thus expresses himself. p. 45 :

“To have *foreseen*, at the creation of matter and of mind, that a period would arrive when matter, assuming its pre-arranged combinations, would become susceptible of the support of vegetable forms; that these should, in due time, themselves supply the pabulum of animal existence; that successive races of giant forms or of microscopic beings should, at appointed periods, *necessarily* rise into existence, and as inevitably yield to decay : and that decay and death, the lot of each individual existence—should also *act with equal power on the races which they constitute* ; that the ex-

tion of every race should be *as certain* as the death of each individual, and the advent of new genera be *as inevitable* as the destruction of their predecessors:—to have foreseen all these changes, and *to have provided by one comprehensive law, for all that should ever occur, either to the races themselves, to the individuals of which they are composed, or to the globe which they inhabit, manifests a degree of power and of knowledge of a far higher order*” than would be manifested, &c.

“This is, perhaps, of all others, the reflection,” says Mr. Powell, in his *Connexion of Natural and Divine Truth*, “which, to a thinking and philosophic inquirer, tends most to exalt his ideas of the Divine perfections, the regulation of all the varied and complicated actions of the material world *by an unvarying system*; the combination of a limited number of first principles producing all the variety and harmony of the creation: the sufficiency of a few simple laws to regulate the entire complexity of the vast mechanism: *the first constitution of the world upon a principle which, without further interposition, contains within itself the means of perpetual renovation and stability.* Now this conclusion rests (as we have said) on the collective inferences of a real maintenance of inviolable order in the material world. It is evident, then, that any event, occurring to interrupt the preservation of this order, would be a serious exception and formidable difficulty in the way of our conclusion.”

To show what sweeping applications of this principle are sometimes made by men of science, even when they think they are vindicating the divine honour and majesty, I take an example from the first of these two writers. In the celebrated calculating engine of Mr. Babbage—the noblest triumph of mathematical and mechanical skill yet known—a machine that is to do, by itself, the work of calculating

the numbers used in astronomical and nautical tables, he has found that he can so adjust the parts, that it shall, at any future period, though ever so remote, make one or two seeming exceptions to that law which it has hitherto observed. This law, he states, however, is not the full expression of that by which the machine acts, but the excepted case is as absolutely and irresistibly the natural consequence of its primitive adjustment, as is any individual calculation amongst the countless multitude which it may previously have produced. For instance, the machine can be so adjusted as to register only *square* numbers for thousands of years; and then, in one or more instances, at any given time, can register *cube* numbers, returning at once, however, to its previous course. And, since a property so wonderful can be given to a piece of human workmanship, it is suggested that what we have gazed upon as miracles—as the actual suspensions of natural law—as the manifestations of a present overruling God—as *supernatural* declarations of His ceaseless dominion over man and the earth he inhabits—as tokens of His sleepless superintendence over this race of ours that He hath made, and which He will hereafter judge—these, it is suggested, after all, are but *natural* results of decrees established thousands or millions of years ago. And so of Providence. It is a Providence exerted in foreseeing, at the first, all possible contingencies, and in providing for them so perfectly, and with a kindness so vigilant, that no occasion for intervention, or even for supervision, can ever afterwards arise. And it is contended that these are the views best calculated to reflect honour on God—to afford exalted conceptions of His infinite majesty.

Now that to such a mind this is the view best calculated, as he affirms, to afford exalted conceptions of Divine wisdom and power, we may not doubt; and there may be

many minds to whom it appears in the same light. To a profound mathematician, employed through long and toilsome years in calculating the possible combinations of numbers—in devising the adjustments of complicated mechanism—in endeavouring to foresee all the disturbing causes that can possibly arise—in striving to bring within the performance of a machine the greatest possible range and compass of results—that such a mind may find itself most awed and overpowered when it thinks what must have been in the conception of that Eternal Being who, out of an infinite number of different laws of gravity which might have been selected (as we could easily show), chose that one (the inverse ratio of the square of the distance), which now obtains and which Newton first discovered, when such an one considers how the best intellect of the scientific world, for the last two centuries, has exhausted itself in tracing out but a few of the consequences of this law—and how all its consequences, even the remotest (nor *its* consequences only, but all the possible consequences of each one of that infinite number of other laws which might have been substituted for it) must have been foreseen by Him who gave it preference—when he considers, too, that this is but one of innumerable material laws now in operation, and whose establishment evinces, in each case, a like boundless foresight—and when to material laws he, in thought, adds those which connect matter with animal life, and those again that connect both with mind—when he thinks of the countless varieties of organized beings, living or extinct—how mountain masses have been piled up, not only out of petrified animals, but even out of dead infusoria so small that forty-one thousand of them make but a cubic inch—and then when he conceives that the nature, functions, and relations of all these countless varieties may have been foreseen and provided for in one

stupendous effort of inventive and creative power, who will not admit that here is a noble conception of God—that to such a mind, with such habits, it would naturally seem the noblest, the most sublime?

But is God to be contemplated and adored by none but mathematicians? And are there not, in the Divine nature, other attributes besides Wisdom and Power? Is there not Holiness? Is there not Rectitude? Is there not Parental Love? When we conceive of Him as a mechanician merely—arranging masses of matter—availing himself of their pre-existing properties—adjusting them to certain uses, how poor, how inadequate, after all, are the noblest of such conceptions! God not only arranged matter—He created it. He assigned it its properties—above all he created mind. He surrounds himself with intelligent offspring. This material framework of nature, these verdant fields, these extended plains and towering mountains, these flowing rivers, this expanding ocean; this grand array of forces, and motions, and vicissitudes, all marshalled, as it were, in order, and moving forward in harmony: what is it all but a dwelling-place for man—the intelligent, self-conscious, accountable child of God. And when does that God shed forth the effulgence of his glory so brightly on our minds, as when we contemplate Him sitting, not only high above all the material forces that He hath made, having an immensity that neither the heavens nor the heaven of heavens can contain, but sending forth conscious intelligences as heralds of His moral perfections?

Even heathen poets could celebrate the praises of God as a *Father*. And what is our noblest conception of Father? When in our thoughts do we seem most to exalt the rule of a wise, just, and loving Parent? To what should we appeal if we were most anxious to commend him to the love and reverence of his household? Would it be merely to the

wisdom with which he has devised and established the regulations of that household ; to the sagacity with which he has anticipated every contingency ; to the fact that he has perfected such a system that it can dispense altogether with his presence and agency, and that he now lives far away from the home of his affections, never interposing in its affairs, nor sending to it one fresh memento of his care? No! we ask of a father regard in the first place to the moral welfare of his children ; we ask a rule and regimen which will contribute to form character, to ennoble sentiment, to develop self-control, and nerve with spiritual power. And we feel that this needs not only law, but the administration of law ; not only rules but influences, and not only these, too, but such changes, from time to time, that those rules can adapt themselves to emergencies created by the child himself in the use or in the abuse of his moral liberty.

Here, then, as it seems to us, is a sufficient answer to Mr. Babbage's theory of *miracles* ; a theory by which he would transform them from supernatural into natural events. He adopts it, because to him it seems the view which best illustrates the wisdom of the Deity. We say, in reply, that did the physical system of the world subsist alone—by itself and for itself—or were it the dwelling-place of beings, not endowed with moral natures, nor with faculties essentially progressive, we might assent to this opinion. But when we consider this system in its higher relations—when we consider it as connected with another and a nobler economy, even a moral and spiritual one—when we recollect that in assigning *laws* to matter and to mind, God seems to have had special reference to the improvement of man, in wisdom and virtue—then a great question arises. Suppose that those laws of nature have failed to lead man to wisdom and virtue : suppose that instead of inciting him to a faithful cultivation of his powers,

to a course of upright, beneficent, and holy living, to a clear recognition of his Creator in the things that he hath made, the very constancy of these laws has contributed, with other causes, to superinduce a practical atheism, and drown men in sensuality and folly. What more likely than that this constancy should in such case be arrested; that the same Divine and miraculous power, which established the system, should now suspend it; that, having failed to teach man by the natural, he should again invoke the supernatural; that, stupified as men were by the earthly and the sensual, they should be startled from their guilty slumbers by a voice from Heaven? This seems to be the true theory of miracles, and it involves no impeachment of the stability of the Divine counsels, since the same *moral purpose*, which assigned fixed laws and properties to matter at first, now requires that, in order to the attainment of its own high and beneficent ends, those laws should be suspended, just as a wise parent, who prescribes a course of exercises for a child, may revoke or suspend them, the moment he finds that they are abused by that child to the injury of his health or his morals.

But some one may say—let it be admitted that it is *moral* disorder, chargeable only on man and on his free moral agency, that occasions these deviations in physical laws from their accustomed course—why not allow such deviations to have been appointed before the foundation of the world, and why not recognise them when they occur, merely as necessary and unavoidable results of the physical character, which God impressed at first upon the universe? I answer, by inquiring why we *should* adopt this view, thus involving some of the plainest parts of the Bible in ambiguity? If natural theology have its own proper evidence, so has the Bible also; and, in choosing between different views of miraculous interposition, neither of which can

claim demonstrative evidence, it is, surely, not too much to ask that some respect should be paid to clear and explicit declarations of the Sacred Books—declarations which point to miracles as direct interpositions of the Almighty, as setting aside natural laws and forces, in order to proclaim His immediate presence, and His active supremacy. Waiving this, however, let me ask if God is one who would be wearied if He gave constant attention to the great structure which He once made, and which He launched on boundless space, its native element? Or, would it derogate from His greatness, though with a father's eye, and all a father's heart, He should continually bend over His intelligent offspring, and interpose when necessary to save them from themselves—from the appropriate fruits of their folly or their guilt? No: concede to man so much of moral freedom that he can sin, and then you may easily represent to yourself an awful moral crisis, which would not only justify, but also require, these miraculous suspensions of law; and thus, while blessed spirits, beneath brighter heavens, may be permitted to behold in new worlds, as they rise spontaneously into being, proofs of the Eternal Power and Godhead, man, the perverse—the erring—the sinful—may need to be rebuked by laws disturbed—by elements convulsed—by catastrophes that seem to attest the utmost displeasure of that God whose wrath is consuming fire.

But again it may be said, that though such a reason or final cause for miracles may be assigned with plausibility, in respect to those which occurred after man was introduced upon the globe, yet it can hardly apply to those great physical vicissitudes which preceded that event, and which we are accustomed to regard as supernatural. I reply, that since clear memorials of those vicissitudes have been engraven on the rocks and hills, they do present to the student of

nature an instructive lesson, in respect to the supernatural, since they lead him back from one memorable era to another—each anterior to the existence of man upon the earth—and yet each illustrated by the exercise of God's creative and miraculous power.

Independent, too, of the confirmation yielded by these records of Creation to the records of Revelation, they teach the further instructive lesson, that the Providence of God is truly a superintending providence—that it did not expend itself in one effort of power and foresight—that, having interposed in ages past one after another display of its creative energies, those energies are to be regarded as ever active, and that man is to feel that the power in which he lives and moves, and has his being, is as sleepless in vigilance as it is exhaustless in kindness and unfailing in rectitude.

I cannot dismiss this branch of the subject without saying one word of the entire nullity of miracles as a ground of evidence, if they are only preordained results of physical law. In such case, not only would the language in which they are described in the Bible be deceptive, but those who wrought them would, in one important sense, be impostors, and the miracles themselves a fraud. They are now supposed to attest the agency of God in a supernatural manner; but this theory makes them merely natural. They come before us in the Bible, claiming regard as special signs and messengers from heaven; but if Mr. Babbage is correct, neither prophecy nor the fulfilment of prophecy—neither prediction of the wonderful works of Christ, nor those works themselves, ought to awaken more awe, or inspire a deeper sense of God's presence, than the daily rising of the sun. All teachers who make God and immortality their theme, would be alike divine messengers, and would stand precisely on the same level, except as

some might excel others in the matter of their instructions. The same foreknowledge, too, which discerned occasion, and the same ordaining power which prepared the way for a Jesus or a Paul, may have provided also for a Mahomet or a Joe Smith; and tyrant after tyrant, as he rises to become the scourge of nations and the terror of mankind, would have to be ranked, on this principle, amongst apostles, as missionaries of the Most High—preadjusted parts in nature's universal plan.

If plagues and earthquakes break not Heaven's design,
Why then a Borgia, or a Catiline?

This may be the philosophy of a rationalizing poet, but it is surely not the philosophy of the Bible; nor can it well be his who sees in God a universal, ever gracious, and provident Father.

II. I have thus spoken of the inconsistency of this theory of causation, with what would seem to be the *true character of God*, as gathered both from nature and from revelation. I come now to speak of its inconsistency with what seems to me to be *the nature and mission of man*. It is often said, that belief in the perfect uniformity of nature is instinctive in man—that all our experience tends to ripen and strengthen this belief; and that any other supposition would render science impossible, and action but a leap in the dark. That belief in the substantial uniformity of nature is intuitive, I admit; and I admit, too, that as we extend our acquaintance with the Divine works, we often find order and uniformity where once we saw only confusion or a supposed interposition from Heaven. But I do not conceive that this intuitive belief is a precise measure of that uniformity which really exists in nature, any more than our instinctive fear of danger or love of pleasure is a precise measure of that which, in the one or other of these

forms, is approaching us. Each serves to admonish us of a general fact, and each impels us to ascertain, by observation and inquiry, its true character and extent. And I would remind those who reason otherwise, and who think that, if there were to be any contingency in nature, any possibility that the regular succession of cause and effect could be interrupted, there would then be an end of all science and all systematic effort; to such I would say, that to man's mind there must, in fact, always be a vast world of contingencies. Whatever may be the case in nature, considered absolutely, there is before *him*, however wide the horizon which his knowledge spreads out, an untrodden, unseen wilderness beyond; and to him that wilderness is crowded with uncertainties. He knows not what a day or an object may bring forth. Let him finish the most consummate piece of workmanship. Let some proud monument, for instance, of nautical architecture, like that* which ten years ago attracted the regard of our whole nation, be completed. Let it be conducted in triumph near to that nation's capitol: and there, on its gay deck, beneath floating ensigns and a bright sun, to the sound of martial music, with banquet all prepared, let the highest of the land, the observed of observers, be gathered to admire its appliances and equipments, and gratulate each other on this noble embodiment of a nation's skill and a nation's munificence. Science and art have now achieved their utmost; no precautions against danger or disappointment have been omitted; and yet in that masterpiece there are still contingencies. Some latent disturbing cause has eluded observation; and in a moment those fearful engines, intended only to be a terror to foes, a strong defence to friends, send a cry of horror through

* The War Steamer Princeton.

the surrounding throng, prostrate in death some of the most honoured of our land, and spread wailing through many a happy household. So limited, after all, is man's knowledge. He discovers what he calls truth, but it is only an approximation, not an exact conformity to things as they are. It embraces some, but not all of the objective reality. Hence the difference between laws as laid down in theory, and as applied in practice. He enlarges the boundaries of his intellectual prospect, but it is only to find that it connects itself at innumerable points with the yet more distant and unknown. And yet he does not therefore abandon inquiry. He does not therefore cease to reason or to act upon the probabilities of the future. He provides for the morrow, though he knows not that that morrow's sun will ever rise upon him. He engages in the ventures of life, oftentimes when all the chances of success are against him. And does he not do well? To omniscience only could all the issues of the future be known—all be fixed and certain. To created minds, much must ever appear contingent, and yet that much shall not prevent them from acting as though it were fixed and ascertainable.

But observe, further, this belief in the uniformity of nature, is not the only intuitive principle of the human mind. Is there not the sense, also, of the supernatural? the idea, instinctive in man, that there is a *power above nature*, and that this power is likely, at times, to interfere with the ordinary course of events? Why is it that men in the infancy of society are so prone to ascribe unwonted phenomena, in the heavens or on the earth, to Deities? Why do they hear the voice of a spirit in the howlings of the tempest, or see his form in the clouds? Why do they people every grove, and fountain, and mountain-clift with its appropriate divinity? Is it not the instinctive uprising

of the soul towards the invisible and supersensual? Is it not a proclamation sent forth from the innermost recesses of our hearts, saying there is more than mere nature, more than eye sees or ear hears—more than change following change in one eternal round. There is a power that established that order for one wise purpose, and that may set it aside for another. There is an eye that does not sleep, and an arm that does not tire; a power that sitteth on the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; and it ordereth all things according to the counsel of its own will.

This, we say, is the instinctive language of the human heart. As there is one intuitive principle that points towards constancy, so there is another that points towards a source of change. Both are liable to excess and abuse. In the terrors and follies of superstition and fanaticism—in the morbid fancy that sees a miracle in every eclipse, meteor, or earthquake—a special Providence in every act of man or nature—we see the sense of the supernatural perverted and abused. But is there no perversion of our faith in nature's uniformity? Whence most of the disappointments of life? Whence the prejudices, the misjudgments of all? Whence the visionary schemes of practical men—the idle speculations of theorists—the blind and braggart confidence which says *all things continue as they were from the beginning—to-morrow shall be as to-day, and much more abundant? Where is the promise of God's judgments? tush! he doth not regard*; and through such confidence what multitudes rush upon their own destruction! All this is but an abuse and misapplication of our instinctive faith in nature's constancy—a premature inference from the past to the future—from the known to the unknown, from what has been, under certain circumstances, to what will be under other and different circumstances.

Both of these principles, as it seems to me, have an important office, as both are liable to perversion. We strive to enlighten and enlarge our views of natural causation, of the established order and sequences in nature, by observation and analysis, by reasoning and experience; and thus we gradually attain to those larger views which characterize true philosophy, and are salutary guides in life. Should it not be so with the instinctive sense of the supernatural? Should science, in its truest and highest sense, hope to advance or to reach a large and comprehensive view of things, if it omit all reference to this deep and all pervading element in the mind's operations? Comte, an atheist, may contend, as he does, that science tends regularly to recede from the supernatural till it plants itself on the metaphysical; and from the metaphysical again till it rests finally in the physical and positive. From him this might be expected. But is this the vein which we should expect from the true disciples of Bacon—of one who wrote in this wise in his *Confession of Faith*:—"I believe, that notwithstanding God hath rested and ceased from creating since the first Sabbath, yet, nevertheless, He doth accomplish and fulfil His divine will in all things, great and small, singular and general, *as fully and exactly by Providence*, as He could by miracle and new creation, though His working be not immediate and direct, but by compass; not violating nature, which is His own law, upon the creature."

In respect to *Providence*, different views, I am aware, have been entertained. To some, Providence is but the prescience that foresaw, and the preordaining power that, in the beginning, provided for every future contingency; so that now the course of things flows on in obedience to nothing but inexorable law. But is such the view which meets the deep and irrepressible yearnings and convictions of the

human soul? Is it only to an inflexible Law-maker that that soul cries for relief from the depths of its distress? Its instinctive resort when awful danger threatens to a power above nature—its appeal when struggling with fierce temptation, or with overpowering appetite for spiritual succour to some Being that can act directly on the intellect, the affections, and the will—its unshaken faith when all things seem to be against it, that though the sea roar, and the waves thereof are lifted up, there is One, a Father, sitting on high, who is mightier, and who doeth all things well; these sentiments—so instinctive and ineffaceable, not learned from Scripture, but felt wherever the human heart throbs with life and emotion—were they given for nought? Do they point to no corresponding reality? or is He to whom they point one who operates on man only through fixed laws and properties, which he never modifies, never overrules, never disturbs?

I put the authority of the Bible, here, entirely out of the account. The great and wise men of the world—those who have drunk deepest at the wells of uninspired wisdom—who have seen, with intuitive glance, farthest into the constitution of things, and whose intuitive perceptions have been most enlarged and ripened by profound observation and reflection on the ways of men and on the course of the world's history: what has been their judgment? Have they seen in Providence only foreknowledge and foreordaining power exerted in creation? Have they seen only Wisdom and Might employed in *establishing* an irreversible order of events, which is destined to move on for ever without superintendence or intervention? Or have they seen in it the *supervision* of an Infinite Father, who is *Governor* as well as *Creator* of all His children, who does not merely supervise, as *spectator*, the movements of dead mechanism, but, as active guide and director, presides over the voluntary agency of intelligent and moral beings; and

though he work no miracles in their behalf, yet causes established laws and operations to concur and coincide in a manner often the most remarkable? On this point let Dr. Franklin answer. No one will accuse him of superstition or of an undue regard for the supernatural. All will admit that few men ever surpassed him as a shrewd observer of life and of human affairs, or as a profound inquirer after the causes and principles that lie at the bottom of great events. And what was his language in the Convention that sat in Philadelphia in 1787 to frame our Federal Constitution, when he rose to support his motion for daily prayers in that body?

It must be remembered that weeks had elapsed without the convention's having accomplished any part of its all-important work, and that irreconcilable differences seemed likely to defeat its purposes altogether. It was under these circumstances that Dr. Franklin introduced his resolution, and made the following remarks: "In the beginning of the contest with Britain," said he, "*when we were sensible of danger*, we had daily prayers in this room for the Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favour. To that kind Providence we owe *this* happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our *future* national felicity. And have we now forgotten this powerful friend? or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance? *I have lived, Sir, a long time (eighty-one years); and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of man.* And, if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, 'that except the Lord build the house, they labour

in vain that build it.' I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel; we shall be divided by our little partial local interests, our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a by-word down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing government by human wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, or conquest. I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business; and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service."

This is not the language of one who looked on God as inexorable, or in other words, as a Law-giver whose system is that of inflexible uniformity. And to whom were these words addressed? Need I say that it was George Washington who presided over this assembly, and that his writings are more remarkable for nothing than for their frequent and pointed recognition of the agency of the same Divine Providence? These venerable men had passed together through times that emphatically "tried men's souls;" and it was in that hot and fiery furnace that their labouring hearts had felt that succour from God was a necessity of our moral nature, and that "man's extremity is God's opportunity." Or make your appeal, if you will, from the authority of Washington and Franklin to that of Shakspeare, the "myriad-minded," of whom it hath been said: "The mind of Shakspeare was as a magic mirror in which all human nature's possible forms, and combinations were present, intuitively and inherently, not conceived, but as connatural portions of his own humanity." And what, according to him, is the language of the human heart, when speaking from its deepest convictions?

“ *Our indiscretion* sometimes serves us well,
When our deep plots do pall; and that should teach us
There’s a Divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.”

A lesson so deeply imprinted on the poet’s own mind, that more than one of his dramas seems to have been constructed for the express purpose of exhibiting the workings of this Divine and special Providence in the affairs of men.

On this great subject I do not propose to touch any farther than as it connects itself with the present state of science, and with some of its supposed aberrations. As there are mathematicians and mechanical philosophers, who, in their views of the fixed order of nature, leave no place for miracles, so there are mental philosophers and anthropologists who seem to leave no place for providence or prayer. As an example of the latter, I may mention the writings of one well known to you by fame, and of whom I would speak as I feel, without the least disrespect. I mean Mr. Combe. No candid mind will deny that he deserves, on many accounts, homage and gratitude, as one who has done good service to philosophy and to mankind. In respect to the very matter under discussion, and in connexion with which he seems to me obnoxious to censure, he has still inculcated with great force, both of reasoning and of illustration, important and much-neglected lessons. He has taught, especially in his work entitled the *Constitution of Man*, that we live under a government of law, *physical, organic, and mental*, which we are bound to respect, and which it is not safe for us to disregard; “that the good and evil of life are much more in our own hands than is generally supposed; that many of the sufferings of humanity—sufferings too often considered as fixed by the Creator in the constitution of the world—admit of removal by a greater knowledge of the laws of nature and a more

careful application of that knowledge; that many of the calamities of life, ascribed to an inscrutable Providence, may, on careful examination, be traced back to misconduct, either in ourselves or in those whom we might have influenced to better things; that an attention to one part of our duty will not exempt us from the consequences of neglecting another; and, generally, that increased knowledge and virtue must necessarily draw after them greatly increased happiness." These are truths by no means new, yet much overlooked, and in urging them on our notice and in setting forth the great command which each one has over the sources of his happiness, Mr. Combe has rendered a useful service to humanity.

Wherein, then, it may be asked, do we dissent from his views? We answer, that we dissent from the fundamental idea of his speculations, which seems to assume that there cannot possibly be such a thing in the universe as the interruption of a natural law, and also from the exaggerated pictures of man's capabilities, and consequent temporal responsibilities which he draws. *Man, sole master of his own destiny*, at least in this world, *by means of obedience to natural laws*, is the sum and substance of Mr. Combe's philosophy, in the work just referred to, and which is much the best he ever wrote. Is it as true and comprehensive a philosophy as Shakspeare's, who assigns to man the humbler office of "rough-hewing his ends," to God the higher one of "shaping" them? Who, that traces back his own experience, or looks on the world around him, does not see an agency, other than man's, when availing himself of natural laws? Who does not see how little way, after all, his utmost knowledge of those laws, or his best obedience to them, can go towards compassing the good or shunning the evils of life? And where would be the use of prayer if all things were ordered by fixed and irreversible

laws, that regard not individuals, but have respect to masses only? If nothing can ever accrue to us except through such laws moving through one ever-recurring round, subject in no respect whatever to modification in themselves or in their connexion with other laws, then must every future event be absolutely fixed, and prayer to have it altered must be a sad masquerade, as deficient in taste as it is in ingenuousness. To announce our wants to God cannot be its office, for to an Infinite Intelligence they must be known already. Nor, if this doctrine be true, can his knowledge be of any avail. To importune for special blessings, temporal or spiritual, would be superfluous, since those blessings, if they fall within the onward way of unalterable laws, will become ours without prayer, and no prayer can procure them if they do not. To exert a persuasive influence on the Divine mind is impossible, since that mind is inexorable. What, in such case, would prayer become, but a species of pious legerdemain, where, under pretence of pleading with God for that which is no longer His to dispense, we gain the chance of communing with his spirit, and get grace, not from him, but by a species of self-development? Were such the Divine government, meditation, not prayer, devout contemplations, not entreaty, not intercession, would befit alike man's estate and God's eternal majesty.

But I must conclude. I have succeeded in exploring but a part of the ground marked out in the beginning of this discourse. Besides the inconsistency of these exaggerated views of the constancy of nature, with any intelligible theory of *miracles* or of *Providence*, I intended to have pointed out their inconsistency, also, with the moral freedom and responsibility of man, and with the existence of evil and disorder in our world. But these points I must omit. My object has been to indicate a *tendency towards*

fatalism, which seems to mark some of the developments of science, both physical and metaphysical, in our day, and which is tantamount, of course, to a disposition to *exclude the supernatural, as an element, from philosophy*. It is a tendency unfriendly, as I believe, to the best interests of science and of life. It leads to premature inductions, and to a presumptuous confidence that, in nature, as she now exhibits herself, we have a literal transcript of *all the past*, and a minute circumstantial prophecy of *all the future*. It prevents us from remembering that all truth reached by induction, when made the basis of prediction and of prospective action, is *contingent* truth; that it becomes us not to say, that on such a day of such a year, a certain phenomenon *must* be observed; but if God so will, or if existing circumstances remain unchanged, that phenomenon will recur. It gives us, too,—this exclusive reference to fixed laws,—an extravagant estimate of the value of our own knowledge; leading us to forget that any formula, which the most profound philosopher may have constructed in order to embody facts, can comprehend, after all, but a portion of the truth, and that there are countless facts not yet explained by any philosophy. It sometimes contributes, too, to engender, among scientific men, a narrowness of mind, which undervalues all other pursuits, and looks upon inquiries not pertaining to their favourite study, as barren and unprofitable. It is, in fine, a tendency which, though most apt just now to infect physical science, is still insidiously spreading itself through the different branches of mental philosophy and polite literature, thus confounding two worlds, the *natural* and *moral*, which ancient philosophers were most anxious to keep asunder; while its influence in theology will be seen in an increasing disposition to eliminate the supernatural, as well from the Bible as from Nature. If such be the

spirit and tendency of these views, I need not add that they must have the effect of obscuring our perceptions of God and of His agency—leading us to see Him only in the *beginning* of the system of the universe; or, if we recognise a *present* Divine agency, leading us to view it as an agency restraining itself by unalterable laws; enslaved in truth to its own irreversible system, just as the ancient poets represent the Gods of Rome as striving in vain to save Cæsar, when his ruin had been decreed by an invisible and irresistible fate—a fate that ruled absolutely over divinities, as well as over men. Need I add, that, with such views of God, there can be little of filial confidence among his creatures—little of that life of faith, which, in the midst of the world's vicissitudes, is the happiest, as well as the noblest of lives; and little of that love, which, casting out fear, is the spring of a cordial, devoted service, that is perfect freedom to the soul.

The Physical Theory of Development.

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V.

PHYSICAL THEORY OF DEVELOPMENT.

IT is an obvious truth, from the application and results of which no candid believer in revealed religion can wish to shield the manual of his faith, that the phenomena of the natural world (which are *one* record of the will of God) cannot be contradicted by any authentic written record of special, spiritual disclosures from the same unchanging source. It is the doctrine of the Bible, that there is "one God, maker of all things, visible and invisible." And, from the idea of a being possessed of sufficient wisdom and power to have fashioned the material universe, is inseparable the conviction that he is alike incapable of mistake and of falsehood. There must, therefore, be an actual harmony between His works and His word. And, since nature is the first and undeniable creature of His power, and expression of His mind, it must follow that any system of doctrine, which purports to be a revelation from God subsequently made known, must accord with nature, the primitive record. None but the blindest and most stupid bigotry will demand, that, if the truths engrossed from the beginning on the tablet of material things are in contrariety to what seems to be the later disclosure of revelation, the elder axioms must be at once repudiated as false.

Christian believers, however, are bound to take this position—that wherever the investigations of science, so called, have conducted men to results which appear to be repugnant to the written word of God, those results, and the processes by which they have been reached, require a most critical review. And, if still there be seeming discrepancy, the common interpretation of Scripture should be carefully reconsidered. And if yet, when all is done, there be, with general harmony, occasional variation, which we are at a loss to reconcile, it is at once manly and devout to assume that either nature or revelation has been misunderstood, and that riper time and better knowledge will discover their unison.

We may venture to concede that Biblical scholars have sometimes maintained a virtual infallibility, not only in the Word of God (which is “sure and steadfast”), but in their own exposition of it; and that assumptions have been put forth as from the oracles of Heaven, which further study of truth, in its material and its written forms, has proved to have sprung from the ignorance and bigotry of recognised advocates of religion on earth. The church did imprison Galileo for asserting a theory of the movement of the heavenly bodies, which, before his time, had not been thought consistent with the language of Sacred Scripture. But riper knowledge of nature and a less servile study of revelation have, in time, brought the most tenacious adherents of the old cosmology to acknowledge that the philosopher was right, and that the sanctity of the Bible was not profaned by his discovery.

With this concession on the one hand, we must be permitted to urge on the other, that naturalists have often made the grossest mistakes in their observations, and inferred general laws from data, the soundness of which had not been adequately ascertained. They have boldly,

I may say insolently, put forth theories, seeming careless of their conflict with received, and even sacred truth—theories which their more thorough followers in the same line of research have proved to be visionary, and incompatible with true science.

It is a comfort to the Christian to find, on reviewing the history of natural science, so far as its record still remains, that, while every period has been agitated by some fancied discovery which, for the time, seemed to discredit some declaration or allusion of Holy Writ, in longer periods these threatening contradictions have either been withdrawn, or superseded, or modified, or explained; insomuch that *there is not now an opinion held among natural philosophers which has withstood the test of fifty years' investigation, by students of physical science, that is, in anybody's esteem, at variance with the Word of God!* A cliff stretching out into the restless sea of speculation, great swelling waves have risen and threatened to engulf it, but, when they came to beat upon its adamant front, they have been dashed into shivering spray, and then vanished into mist or subsided into the common level.

They who love the Bible have nothing to fear, but rather everything to hope, from *actual discoveries* of the laws of nature. Definitive results of investigation, once settled, and commanding the suffrage of true scholars, will hereafter, as heretofore, yield themselves as evidence that in the Word of God is an outline, strictly exact, of the method of His works. Still, sciolists will follow one another in unbroken succession, “for there is a spirit in man,” though fallen, and the “inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”

The mind of man, instinctively seeking the cause of all things (that the heart may pay homage), is diverted from the true object of its search by pride, the earliest and most

irreparable frailty of human character. Having discovered *some* antecedents to the present order of things, which are not obvious on the face of nature, reason becomes intoxicated with its draught from these deeper springs of being; and, having gotten back two or three stages nearer to the origin of things, it spurns to be taught, by simple precept, what lies beyond. It revolts at accepting *ultimate* truth. It yearns to find a physical cause and prototype behind every sensible development, and feels circumscribed by the abrupt announcement—"God made this." And so, unless there be first a thoughtful confidence in the written Word, and a fixed habit of devout recognition of the God of the Bible, the eager student of natural science, elated with discoveries fresh to himself, and utterly unknown to the common world, will grow presumptuous, and, by hypothesis, will endeavour to multiply secondary causes beyond the limit of known fact, so that a Creator shall be removed so far from the existent, every-day world as to place him beyond the reach of practical observance.

There is a school of philosophers now extant, by no means contemptible in regard to talent, learning, or numbers, who are a melancholy illustration of the truth of these remarks. They once exerted little influence on the common mind, because their writings were too strictly scientific and technical to be read with interest or appreciation, by any save those who had already made some research into the same branch of study. But, within the last ten years, their notions have been popularized, and made part of the staple of common infidelity, in an ingenious but fallacious work, which has been extensively read, and, with rare credulity, accepted. I refer to a book entitled "*The Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation.*"* It avows no opposi-

* I am happy here to record the declaration of a ripe scholar, who honours the chair of Natural Philosophy in one of our universities, that the assumptions

tion to the Mosaic account of the creation ; it speaks reverently of the God of the Bible ; lapses into no direct denial of the revealed doctrine of Divine Providence ; but puts forth some facts, more assumptions, and resulting theories, in such forms as cannot be held consistently with submission to the authority of the Bible. In regard to the planetary system, it dignifies, what Sir William Herschell hinted at as a bare hypothesis into a positive, settled theory, to wit, that, inasmuch as with a telescope of moderate power, certain nebulae or luminous clouds could be discovered floating in distant space, these are incipient planets, and that the sideral heavens, which now sparkle over our heads, were all fashioned by the gradual condensation of such diffused material. The supposed facts on which this hypothesis was built have been sensibly shaken, if not totally removed, by more recent discoveries. The great telescope of Lord Rosse has resolved some of these nebulae into clusters of shining

of the author of "The Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation" are not now sustained by any respectable body of scientific men ; that the reviewers exposed the spurious facts and unsound positions of that impertinent book so fully and severely, that the deductions of science have since manifested rather a bias in the opposite direction. I am glad if true scholars repudiate it. Christian philosophers always have. I am not, however, dispossessed of the apprehension that there are many individuals who purport to be scholars, that find it convenient to propound the grossest fallacies of the book under consideration, as if they were established philosophical facts. Everybody knows that there is, in this country, a class of *smart* men, who dish up much of our literature, that are neither devoid of education, nor yet, in the highest sense of the word, scholars—men who do more to tincture the public mind than their more profound superiors, from whom they borrow just as much science as they can get without trouble, and make sufficient to secure a reputation with the reading public. They are the "jobbers" of the world's scientific commerce. While they bring nothing new among us, they find out what there is, and take and distribute what they can make profitable. Among these men, the type of opinion which I have here endeavoured to confute, is quite current, and from them it is taken to "retail" by their smattering readers, or my eyes and ears are both at fault.

spheres. And science dare not assert, at this hour, that they are not systems of stars, like our own, revolving round their appropriate centres. Sir John Herschel, pursuing the sublime studies which, before his day, made the name of his house illustrious, has not ventured to endorse the hypothesis of his honoured sire, but waits the result of his observations in the southern hemisphere, before he will presume to agitate the world by theories of its history.

In regard to the animal system, the bold author of the "Vestiges" has broached a similar scheme of development. With his speculative predecessor, Lamarck, he asserts the earliest organic form to have been the globule, and assumes it to be possible, that, by galvanism, animal life can be imparted—*an assumption which no well-authenticated experiment can be adduced to sustain!* Beginning with this insinuation respecting the origin of organic and animate being, the author proceeds to declare, that all forms in nature, living and dead, have been gradually developed from a primitive, crude, and imperfect state, and that the higher orders of animal life have succeeded by regular gradation from those which were inferior in organization.* Geological discovery does, indeed, disclose that, in successive periods, there have been successive races, perhaps I may say, orders of animals. And it may be conceded that, in those remote and formative periods in the history of our globe, of which its foundation rocks are the only record, there was an adaptation of living creatures to the imperfect abode in which they were placed, as there is now a like adaptation to its improved condition. But *it is not true that there is such organic relation discoverable between the primitive, secondary, and tertiary forms of animal life, as to justify the assertion, that the latter were mere developments*

* This, too, is but a speculation, which finds no sufficient warrant in the record of nature.

of the former. There has not been that uniform improvement in all the orders of animal being, which would favour the idea of a progressive, philosophical, self-adjusting growth of nature to its present scale of advancement, and which, once established, would give place to the theory which a modern German philosopher* of the same school has boldly put into words—"The eternal is the nothing of nature." "There exists nothing but nothing, nothing but the eternal." "Real and ideal are no more different from each other than ice and water."

In a discourse like the present, it would be impossible to give extended extracts from the writings of these authors, and neither the time, the occasion, the place, nor the speaker, would be fit for entering upon a detailed and critical notice of the scientific observations on which these bold theories rest.† I am the more willing to omit the recital of these things, because there is such an appetency in the human mind for whatever may help it to be sceptical, that the confutation of speculative follies, though it were triumphant, and the disproof of alleged facts, though it were annihilating, would lapse from the minds of many hearers, while the evil suggestions of infidelity would remain. I shall attempt, therefore, but to present a few of the *moral* and *rational considerations* which oppose themselves to the scheme of modern materialists.

The briefest outline of their theory, which with justice I could sketch, is now before you. On the one hand, you have seen that it begins by ignoring the Creator, as one immediately concerned in the fashioning of anything as it

* Okin.

† For full exposure of the inaccuracy in fact, and unsoundness in philosophical deduction, which characterize the writings of these men, see Professor Sedgwick's "Discourse on the Studies pursued at the University of Cambridge."

now exists. It interposes between us and him such an interminable series of second causes, and removes him to such a remote period in the dim ages of the past—it tapers off the material universe to such an infinitesimal and undefined shape, before it associates it with the hand of God—that nothing is left of the incipient world or its Creator conceivable by man, which renders it revolting to his moral sense to say, “The Eternal is the nothing of Nature!”

On the other hand, the modern materialist not only finds his dynamic forces essentially existent in matter, but he presents them as capable of producing all those phenomena, intellectual and moral, which ever are seen embodied in man, the noblest organic form. Galvanism, which those living contradictions, credulous sceptics, persuade themselves can produce life in certain gelatinous globules, it is assumed can produce thought and emotion by action on the nervous system of man. And thus all spiritual being is expurgated from the Universe;—no father in Heaven, no child on earth—but a dull, sluggish ball reeling in space—a concrete cloud, gradually perfected into a habitable world, and then developing out of its own substance, by a slow accession of ennobling qualities, sentient and responsible man.

It may not be amiss to remark at this stage of our subject, that though God and the soul are thus *practically* and for all religious purposes removed from the recognition of the materialist, yet *logically* the existence of neither is thrown into doubt. For if we grant that the universe has, in its organic and its animate forms, grown to what it is by slow and regular development, yet the more unpromising the germ or egg from which it sprang, the more wondrous and complicated the latent power with which it was at first endowed. A designer, infinite in wisdom and boundless in power, must still be presupposed, or how could that inert

and insufficient, and sluggish matter have been impregnated with such manifold and curious issues? Reduce nature if you can, like a mathematical quantity, to its lowest terms, and in the same proportion you make it comprehensive of greater power—you widen the difference between that original teeming something and the nothing that lies beyond it!

Suppose we could follow back the process of creation step by step, which the materialist says has been slowly and steadily developing out of a crude and chaotic state, through countless ages, and that these gradations were regular, and after a common law of sequences, up to the first germination of the world-seed; yet the next move in our backward research would launch us into an abyss wider and deeper than the whole reach from the pregnant masses of primeval chaos to the luxuriance, and beauty, and mechanism, and life of the world that now is. Oh, the immensity of difference between nothingness and matter, however rude and shapeless, yet, according to the theory with which we are now dealing, instinct with the power of organism, and capable of development into life and thought and moral sentiment! A God were still in demand to have made the first material, though it were but a dim nebula floating in space, and to have infused it with those attributes of development by which it has attained to its present condition! But, my hearers, a God whose existence is to be proved by an intricate process of logic, who is thrust by the impertinence of scientific hypothesis out of a present actual universe, and recognised, if at all, as creator but of the rough material from which the worlds have grown, and that in the inconceivable depths of a past eternity, is to the finite mind of man no God at all. The faltering soul cannot grope so far to find him. The mechanism of such a self-existent and parturient world would

engross the admiration and the reverence of the thoughtful, and perplexity and indifference would fill the void immense between it and its remote first cause. And such has been the practical influence of the scheme upon the leading scholars who have constructed and promulgated it. Lamarck, and Oken, and Comte, advert to no God as a being of personal attributes, and the masked author of "the Vestiges" would have had less power to injure the morals of the reading portion of the community, and would not have materially depreciated his own, if he too had omitted to speak of a Deity, who is in his regard a mere speculation!

But this modern type of materialism is to be reprobated, not only for its practical removal of the Creator from the cycle of time, and the compass of the known universe; it is subversive of any theoretical conceit of a superintending Providence. It assumes that all things proceed as they do, in obedience to certain determinate laws of development, which are inherent in nature; that the universe goes on like a clock wound up, making its successive indications without the care or interference of a master's hand! The ideal God who but now, in the process of creation, was put so far away, that the soul of man was bewildered in finding Him at the gray dawn of material being, now appears congealed into a grim and iron fate which rules without sense or variation!

There can be no concord between the idea of a reigning Deity, bearing the sceptre of command, and a system of the universe which invests all things with intrinsic powers to combine, develop, and rotate in ceaseless and unfailing order. And is it philosophically more probable that insensate matter, by the energy of its own qualities, evolves such complex forms, such wondrous harmonies, such physical and spiritual life, than that a supreme mind watches

and directs, and an efficient hand fashions, adjusts, and modifies the whole? What faculty of man is better satisfied with a divinity whose only acknowledged act (in a period of the past too remote to be reached by the wing of the imagination) was the flinging from his creative hand the dust which has since condensed *itself* into spheres and systems, and left the Creator an obsolete, superannuated power? Surely our complex nature, physical, intellectual, and moral, finds not its heavenward aspirations met and fulfilled by such a God as this! Man's soul requires to be conscious of subjection in all that concerns him, and the globe on which he lives, to a present, superintending, and controlling mind. Think you that all the tribes of our race would have been found offering sacrifices and worship to the great unknown God, if the unsophisticated mind could conceive of Him, as enthroned in the deepest recesses of a past eternity, and then and there having given to the material universe the one and only impulse it should ever receive from his omnipotent hand? A Creator, ruled out of the daily government of the realm of nature, by an inexorable law of physical sequences, though he made that law himself, has no attribute wherewith to enlist the worship of mankind. It is essential to our condition, ay, to our moral instincts, that we regard our successive experiences in life, our supplies and our deficiencies, our sorrows and our joys, as attributable to the ruling hand and intelligent disposal of a superior, personal power. We should neither obey nor feel the impulse to offer prayer, nor the least restraint of moral accountability, of which men in all conditions show some living traces, if the God demanded by the religious element in our hearts were not a God of providence. And the materialist, who conceives of the universe as so consummate and nicely adjusted a piece of mechanism, in which no want can exist that provident

nature with plastic grace of adaptation will not rush to supply, is the last man who should leave this fearful gap, this yawning hiatus, in the mutual fitness of things unprovided for!

As a philosophical system, the theory of material development is obnoxious also to this objection: that, pursued a little further in the direction of its advocates, it would make God rather the eventual result than the first cause of nature.

It propounds, as we have seen, the idea that the wondrous system of the universe originated in the nearest possible approximation to nothing; that, from such an inception, it has gone on developing its inherent resources of form and beauty, and production, and life, and thought, and moral sentiment; that man, in all his loftiest faculties, is but an improved animal, the progeny of apes at one stage of his ancestry, of reptiles still further back, of fishes before, and of mere "infusoria" at the first. Now, if such a law of progression has been at work through the dim ages of the past, what rational objection can be made to the presumption that it is still, and will be, operative, until perfection shall be the issue? And perfection is another name for God. Thus, we have the strange spectacle of a school of philosophers, who have practically superseded the Deity, by maintaining that matter is inherently possessed of all his powers—suggesting to a mind which, from their theory of the past, dares to look forward and anticipate the future, that, although the Infinite did not make the world, the world will at length make him. My lips revolt at giving utterance to a sentiment so preposterous, so closely bordering on the profane! But it is best for us, when contemplating a system so insidious as this modern scheme of materialism, to look it full in the face, and to mark its most odious lineaments. It is instructive to follow out the trail

on which we are put, when we join the rovings of men, who enlist for scientific research with something less than reverence for the Word of God! The more gross of these materialists seem to regard the present state of things as the highest stage of development, for Oken has actually reduced to language the sentiment, "Man is God wholly manifested." If this were true, death must be the extinction of man; for his mental and moral endowments are, by the same scheme, only peculiar exertions of his physical system, wrought upon by galvanism, the energizing agent of nature. When he dies, therefore, inasmuch as no superior organization is reproduced out of his material, that which distinguishes him as man, to wit, his sentient being, is lost. Or suppose we take the more consistent alternative, and, assuming that the universe, as it now is, the realm of order, and beauty, and life, is the spontaneous development of crude, chaotic matter, proceed to infer that higher orders of being are yet to be evolved until perfection shall have been reached; still, man, according to such a theory, must suffer the loss of his individuality. His soul, while he has a personal existence, is no spirit dwelling in his flesh as a tabernacle; it is only some function of his body, made to manifest itself by the action of one of nature's mechanical powers. The transmigration of such a soul is inconceivable. The man of to-day cannot find his identity in the demi-god of the future, any more than the dull lizard of a more primitive age is personally present in the bold naturalist of our own.

I remarked, at the outset, that the materialist, though he thus attributes thought and moral sense to the nervous system, stimulated by galvanism, and so makes them coeval with the body, does not logically get rid of the existence of a human soul, for the soul may be defined as the reasoning and moral faculty of man. He does but define, and

limit, and sensualize the mode of its existence. Yet in so doing he sets it free from all moral responsibility. He puts the name of God so far off in the black depths of the past, and, between, introduces so many substantial media on the one hand, and so confronts it on the other with the impending loss of its identity, that there is felt neither the exaction of duty from the one, nor the hope of advantage from the other.

And this introduces us to a yet further objection to the scheme of the materialist. It extinguishes all motive in man to act answerably to the suggestions of his moral sense. The system forbids the apprehension of any judgment, or the occurrence of any future punishment or reward. As there is no immediate lawgiver, no moral administrator of government, no spiritual subject, no future on which this thinking evanescence, which we have called a soul, can count, from what consideration save the seeming interests or pleasures of the hour, can spring the impulse which shall direct and incite the action of man? Nay, to suppose the law of development, which the materialist propounds, to be perfectly triumphant, we must make man but one of the little wheels in the mechanism of the universe, and his every turn enforced by this complication with the moving whole! Do what he may of good or evil, it shall be wrought not by him as an independent moral agent, but only through him, by the necessities of time and circumstance. If there be any responsibility allowed under such a scheme, it must rest on the whole, and not on the part, and that which it charged to the universe will not press very heavily on the individual! And what would supervene upon the earth, if this theory of life might obtain among men? The geologist, entranced with his discoveries in the deep places of the sphere, or filling balloons of speculation in his study to launch into the deeper places of the

air, might do society no harm, unless it were by constantly disturbing its accepted philosophy of nature with new and more visionary hypotheses; but what would restrain the unrefined, the sensual, the necessitous? What shield would protect weak innocence from mighty guilt? What threatening avenger would guard the rights of property and of life, if the dread of something after death were dispelled by the persuasion that thought and feeling are mere physical phenomena, and will cease when dissolution shall unstring the nerves on which they have vibrated? Earth would become the very vestibule of hell, and men and devils mingle in equal intercourse, if the work of the law written on men's hearts, and amplified on the page of revelation, did not disseminate a loftier conceit of our nature, relations, and destiny, than these materialists endeavour to make current in the walks of learning.

I may detain you with but one further objection to the theory of physical development, now attractively set forth, and winning respectful attention, if not assent, in literary circles. It is at variance with the consciousness of immortality, which seems to be inherent in the mind of man. At any rate, the pagan sages of all times and all tribes, who have thoughtfully considered the intellectual and moral attributes of our race, have inferred, with various degrees of confidence, that there is some ethereal part which survives the body. The extent of the mind's range, the occasional triumph in which it rises over physical suffering, the accumulating strength and resources which it manifests through the period of the body's decline, and down to the moment of its dissolution, all are unaccountable, but upon the theory that, while the soul abides in the flesh, it is a lordly guest of higher pedigree and nobler nature, and that, when it goes forth, "the earthly house of this tabernacle being dissolved," it is, to find a house, not made with

hands, eternal. But the studious materialist, not allowing himself to speculate on the phenomena of his own intellectual being, as a special department of nature, governed, perhaps, by its own harmonious, but not identical, laws, proceeds to inspect the monuments of the past; and, finding some tokens of progression in the lapse of the ages, with inventive alacrity, he fills up the breaks, bridges the chasms with bold theories of a single span, pushes further back, with daring speculation, than the enduring record of material nature runs, condenses all things into one pregnant mass, and then proclaims the universality of a law of which he has caught glimpses through the chinks of nature, that all things have been developed by spontaneous energy, one from another; and, to illustrate his allegiance to this physical fate, he bows his own heaven-aspiring forehead to find his ancestry among the apes and reptiles of the earth, and, his vivid soul, panting for immortality, he constrains to be submissive, while he declares it to be nothing more than his material form disclosing a peculiar aspect, under the action of an extraneous physical agent! Oh! is there any picture of humanity more humiliating, more significant of the depravity and moral subversion of our nature, than we see exhibited in the scholar whose reason is hoodwinked by his pride of attainment and invention, and who, to perfect and maintain a favourite theory, will blink the facts of science, invent connecting links to suit his need, spurn, unstudied, the disclosures of God's Word, and even stifle the revolting instincts of his own nature? The materialist does all this. To complete the reach of his conjectural law of regular, successive development, he denies himself that pleasing sense of immortality which ennobles the unread peasant, and, to mark the triumph of his scientific skill, reduces his soul to a thing, a clod of earth, sparkling for a

moment with intelligence, and then returning to its dull, unconscious, and base condition again!

Before this assemblage I may seem to have been treating of a type of scepticism which is but rarely found, and infatuating the minds of only a few enthusiastic scholars, whom much or little learning has made mad. Would to God it were even so! I grant you that materialism, so systematized and illustrated by natural and supposititious facts, beguiles but a small remnant of the great multitude of practical septsics. The scheme is too new, its field of research too intricate, its reasonings too subtle to have yet been apprehended by the common mind. But materialism in a cruder form—the wish, half formed into a belief, that there is no moral Governor, no living soul, no future after death—is the sad and paralyzing scepticism which besets every spirit consciously guilty, unrepentant, and unforgiven! The irreligious world is on the alert for material, however specious, to justify such grovelling opinions. And no witness against the truth of revelation is so sure of welcome as that old enemy, against whose sophistries Paul cautioned the church in his day, “science falsely so called!”

The danger from this supercilious and assuming demon of infidelity—scholastic materialism—is the more imminent, because it is now mingling itself with the popular literature of the age! And the age is one which loves to be flattered with fragments of science, flung into its intellectual pabulum as it were, prepared to enjoy its savour and digest its substance. Technical terms, once abhorrent, are now affected, and serve to illuminate the pages of popular books, and magazines and newspapers. And men who can catch a few of them, and lard their lean thoughts, to use the phrase of quaint Burton, with such basting, can often impose on themselves the conceit, and on others the convic-

tion, that they understand the science to which such nomenclature belongs. When the literary taste of the masses discovers such an infirmity, and infidelity disguised in the mantle of science is attempting to tamper with it, it is time for the advocates of revealed truth to lift up the warning voice, and to demand that alleged discoveries be well authenticated; that theory extend itself no further than fact; and that revelation, which has such clustering tokens in every department that it is of God, shall be accounted true in its history of the creation, in its doctrine of Divine Providence, in its portraiture of man's complex nature, until Science, in all her haunts, and by the voice of all her devotees, shall proclaim, with unfaltering tongue, through half a century, that the record is false, and that she has deciphered Nature's Monogram, and is ready to rehearse its infallible import!

Ecclesiastical Development.

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VI.

ECCLESIASTICAL DEVELOPMENT.

"Ye should earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints." JUDE, 3.

UNTIL within a comparatively recent period, it was acknowledged by all Christians, that this injunction was binding on the Church in every age; that it possessed a *faith* or creed which had been delivered to it from above once for all; that an essential part of its office was to hold and transmit that faith; and an essential part of its duty was to contend strenuously for it when assailed. It was conceded, too, as a matter of course, that this true Christian Faith was the doctrine held and taught by Christ and His Apostles, that and no other. There was, indeed, serious diversity of opinion as to the channel by which that doctrine was derived to us; whether it flowed through Scripture alone, or through Scripture and tradition co-ordinately: but there was no dispute as to its authority and sufficiency when once ascertained. But all this is now changed; a more daring school of theology has risen up, which treats with scorn those ancient limitations of Christian doctrine, and vindicates for it a domain not less boundless than that of natural science, which dissuades us from resorting for our faith to the ancient fountains of Scripture, or even Tradition, but bids us draw it fresh and new from the abundant streams of the present Church.

In this age of progress it is supposed to have been discovered and even proved, that Christian doctrine did not come down to us in its entirety from Christ and His apostles; that it was not revealed to these last as it is to modern pontiffs, doctors, and teachers; that it is indeed communicated to the world, bit by bit, as it is needed, and that thus, gradually accumulating, it is impossible to foretell to what volume and amplitude it may at length grow. Such is the theory of development, of which occasional glimpses seem to have been taken by Romish divines ever since the Reformation, but which has been more plainly indicated by the celebrated Mohler, in his work on Symbolism, and has been at length, with great elaboration of detail, great profusion of learning, and great acuteness of reasoning, stated and defended by Dr. Newman, as his justification for renouncing the Church of England, and submitting to that of Rome. It is quite clear, too, that this theory, though to so great an extent the product of the teeming brain of a recent convert, is not only tolerated, but warmly welcomed, in the Church of Rome; and that the leading minds of that Church are prepared to take this very position as the battle-ground on which they will hereafter contend for its exclusive authority and universal domination. For Dr. Newman, on making his submission, expressly referred this book to the judgment of the Church he was entering; and that Church is by no means slow or mild in censuring when she is displeased. On the contrary, she has a congregation or commission, which sits for the very purpose of examining books, and placing on the "Index Expurgatorius" those which are considered faulty. And not only do we find on that list treatises of Christian doctrine, but even works of science and general literature, down even to the lightest tales of fiction. But no unfavourable sentence has gone forth

against this remarkable production. On the contrary, it has been received by the church to which it appealed with the most flattering applause. A writer in the *Dublin Review*, well understood to be Cardinal Wiseman, speaks of the volume as "the description of the process of reasoning, by which the author's powerful and well-stored mind was brought to a full accordance with Catholic truth." The Roman Catholic Bishop of Edinburgh took it as the text for a series of lectures in the Scotch capital. And when the author, soon after its publication, went on the continent, his journey through France was illustrated by all the honours which the most eminent of the clergy could lavish on him; while his reception at Rome was not that of a penitent seeking forgiveness, but rather that of a conqueror in the heroic age, entering the Eternal City after a glorious campaign. The late Pope presented him with a beautiful crucifix. The present pontiff permitted him to reside in the College of the Propaganda, and to edify and instruct the people by his preaching, even before he obtained the holy orders, alone recognised in the Roman Court.* We must infer, then, that his doctrine, just before published, must have been adjudged by the Pope not only sound, but unusually well fitted to enlighten and guide souls.

The Church of Rome then stands before Christendom committed to this theory of development, first by its silence, next by its action. A man of note comes bending before it, acknowledges it as his sovereign, and brings in his hand this book as an offering, and asks to be corrected if he has erred in anything there taught. He receives no answer, but an applausive, cordial welcome. This is surely an acknowledgment that his teaching deserves no censure. But it does not rest there. This teaching is caught up and echoed

* Wordsworth's Letters to Gondon.

and re-echoed by priest and prelate, from the pulpit and from the press, in various countries and in different languages. The doctrine, then, has ceased to be merely tolerated, it has become authoritative; it is already half established, and its history will in time furnish another instance of the very process of which itself is the proffered solution, the process by which an opinion grows and hardens into an article of faith. Indeed, while this is a result which Romanists do not seem to deprecate, it is one which they probably could not avoid. They seem shut up by an inexorable logical necessity to this doctrine of development. It may be an unsafe harbour, but it is the only one in which they can now anchor. For, at this day, it does not seem possible for audacity itself to be so unblushing as to maintain that Roman doctrine and primitive doctrine are precisely one and the same; that the supremacy of the Pope is understood now as it was by St. Polycarp, St. Hippolytus, and St. Cyprian; and that the confessed deification of the Virgin, as it is in our age, was a familiar and welcome thought to Epiphanius and Irenæus.

It is obvious, then, that Dr. Newman is only a little in advance of the great body of Romish controversialists, and that they must all, however reluctantly, come up to his stand-point, because it is demonstrable that *unless the Church of Christ has the power to develop new doctrines, the Church of Rome has not the right to teach her present doctrines*. Has, then, the Church of Christ, whether confined, as by Romanists, to their own communion, or extended to all who believe in Him, and are baptized into His name, has the Church any such power or right? Now it is necessary to acknowledge, that there is a growth in the Church as a body, and even an expansion of Christian doctrine as a system, which may, by a dexterous, logical legerdemain, be made to appear to a careless observer, the same with

that process of development which Dr. Newman advocates. Undoubtedly our Saviour did promise that His kingdom should increase from a very small beginning to mighty issues, as a plant grows from a seed, or as leaven diffuses itself through a lump, and in this, as in other things, His word has not returned unto Him void. Mankind have seen, with wonder and with awe, the vision of the Babylonian monarch fulfilled, the stone cut out without hands break in pieces and consume the iron and the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold, all opposing powers, however august, however consolidated, and that stone itself become a great mountain and fill the earth; they have seen the little band of a hundred and twenty disciples, beginning at Jerusalem, the Church of Christ. enlarge itself, and crush, one by one, all the obstacles which the fanaticism of the Jews, and the wisdom of the Greeks, and the policy of the Romans, and the rude valour of the Barbarians, could rear up against it, and extend itself northward and southward and eastward and westward, until it occupied the whole civilized world, and still continue to grow, daily making new conquests from the surrounding wilderness of Heathendom. In this sense there has been, indeed, a mighty development in Christianity. And amid these altered circumstances, and because of them, the laws and institutions of the Church have been greatly expanded. The government of the disciples was a very simple thing when they all met together in one upper chamber. Even during the lifetime of the Apostles, it became more complex. Timothy at Ephesus, and Titus in Crete, had *to set in order things that were wanting*, to make rules, administer discipline. As in process of time, new exigencies arose, so new laws were required, and new tribunals and officers to promote the peace and order of Christian society. Canon law then, and ecclesiastical polity are now, of necessity, very different and

far more complete than anything of the same nature which was known in the infancy of the Church. Here then is growth in the body itself and in its institutions, the garments, so to speak, which it wears for vigour and for beauty. But this relates only to its outward, visible existence. We must go further, and acknowledge that, in what more immediately concerns its inner life, in its teaching, in its avowed and express faith, there has been, in the progress of time, an expansion which he who chooses may call a Development.

It is quite obvious, *e. g.*, to our very senses, that the Nicene Creed is more voluminous than the Apostles', and it is beyond dispute, that the Nicene is later than the Apostles', and that the increase is not by an accumulation of words, but by the annunciation of distinct and substantial propositions. The faith or creed of the Church, then, in one age, as propounded to mankind, was enlarged beyond what it had been in a preceding. And, afterwards, the decrees of the Councils of Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, not to speak of others, were accepted by the Church as definitions of the essential faith. Here, then, is an advance, century after century, step by step. How, then, is it to be distinguished from that development, the operation of which has recently startled Christendom? This may be offered as a short and summary answer to the question, that the one is objective, the other subjective. That development, as taught by Dr. Newman, is *increase in the amount of revealed truth itself*, which increase the Church generates, while, on the other hand, the *legitimate* expansion of the Christian faith is a better understanding, and a clearer and more explicit statement, on the part of the Church, of truth already, once for all, revealed *by God*. True progress in Christian doctrine is found in a more perfect apprehension of what already exists; development is

an *addition* of what did not heretofore exist as *revealed* truth: as a new tier of stones is laid on a temple, as a fungus grows on an oak, or as alloy is poured on the fine gold. The subjective growth in Christian doctrine, on the part of the Church, is not only lawful but desirable, and, indeed, inevitable. Individual Christians, as they grow in grace and in experience, grow of necessity, likewise, in knowledge, not because more truth is given them, but because more is received by them. The human mind, applied to Holy Scripture, is like a cup dropped into the ocean—it draws up more or less according to its own measure, hindered by no limit on the part of a reservoir which is itself unlimited. So the collective mind of the Church goes on to learn from age to age.

Prophecies explain themselves by fulfilment. Opposite aspects of the same truth are combined and reconciled. General propositions are drawn out, by deduction, into the particular verities which they include, as, from axioms in mathematics, theorems flow. Thus, we find in Scripture a certain moral law—"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." Christians meditate on this law, the consciousness of the whole Church grapples with it, and it is traced out to its issues. It is soon discovered to be repugnant to gladiatorial shows, to a harsh and unmitigated system of slavery, even to rigorous parental discipline like that of the Romans, to aggressive warfare, and the like; and practices of this sort begin to be assailed, either by express laws of the Church, or of Christian states, or by the current and pressure of Christian sentiment. Here then is a deduction of particular moral judgments from a general principle. And thus, to take an instance from what is less ethical and more simply intellectual: Jesus Himself declared His oneness with the Father. When heresies arose concerning His nature, it became necessary

for the Church to define in what sense He was one with the Father, and it was then affirmed that He was so one as to be of the same substance with the Father, and this consubstantiality was made a test of orthodoxy, as it has ever since continued.

Yet it is clear that this consubstantiality is only a particular truth, embraced in the general truth that He is one with the Father, not figuratively but literally; for, if one, then He must be of the same substance. Yet Dr. Newman does not hesitate to say that, because this doctrine was defined in the fourth century, it was a development of that century, as the papal supremacy and the worship of the Virgin were of subsequent eras. Let them be shown to be alike in this respect, that each flows by necessary consequence from Scripture, and then we shall be constrained to place them on the same level as of Divine authority. Until a doctrine, however, is proved to be taught in Scripture, either expressly or implicitly, it ought not to be received as a part of revelation, unless it have the evidences that revelation has, miracles like those of Christ and His Apostles, antecedent prophecies, harmony with God's acknowledged word, and superhuman purity and elevation on the part of its teachers. When any Romish doctrine comes to us with these notes of a Divine origin, we are bound to accept it as Divine; until then, jealousy for the honour of God's word, as well as respect for our own understandings, bids us reject it. For this notion of development, if admitted, requires us to believe that the Church is empowered to declare from time to time truths necessary to salvation, which are *strictly new*; that matters of doctrine are now binding on the faith of Christians which were never known to the Apostles and Evangelists, actually or virtually; never taught by them orally or in writing; never accepted by or known to the Church in

its primitive and purest state ; nay, that hereof the Church may teach with the penalty of eternal damnation on those who will not believe it, what no one at the present day believes, no one has ever heard of, no one has ever imagined ; and is certainly a most formidable claim, and makes Christianity scarcely less than a new religion. It binds us down to accept, not the faith which purified and saved the soul of St. Paul, or St. Augustin, but *any faith* now or hereafter to be declared by the authority of the Church. Do these persons who offer us this new and startling doctrine, confirm it by miracles, not of winking madonnas, and self-inflicted stigmata, but by such miracles as become a new revelation—by such miracles as those of Pentecost and the Resurrection ? It cannot be pretended. Do they bring their proofs from Holy Scripture ? So far from it, that there is nothing which Holy Scripture more vehemently affirms, and more frequently reiterates, than the immutability of the faith. “One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism,” is what St. Paul preaches. “Contend strenuously for the Faith, *once* delivered to the saints,” is St. Jude’s exhortation. And thus again St. Paul says, “Keep, O Timothy, that which is committed to thy trust ;” “Take heed unto thyself and the doctrine, *continue* in them ;” “Charge some that they teach no other doctrine.” But especially consider how St. Paul fulminates against this deadly error in his Epistle to the Galatians. “Though we,” says he, “or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” As Vincent of Lirins remarks, he does not say though I, but though we, though James, though John, though Peter himself, of course, one may infer, though any of his successors, real or pretended ; yea, though an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed. Nor is he content to say this once, but immediately and

deliberately repeats it. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. And thus, as Vincent observes, "to preach anything to Christians besides what they have received, never has been lawful, nowhere is lawful, nor ever shall be lawful. That vessel of election, that teacher of the Gentiles, that trumpet of the Apostles, that herald of the lands, that confidant of Heaven cries, and cries repeatedly, and to all, always and everywhere, that if any shall have preached a new doctrine let him be anathematized."

And it is to be noted that the Gospel against which St. Paul so vehemently protests, is not one incompatible with his own, but different from his own, different only if it affirm what he did not affirm. And if we inquire into the judgment of the Fathers on this point, we find that if they knew more of the will of God than the Apostles did, they were utterly unconscious of this superior wisdom, but supposed themselves only to teach what they had received by transmission from these very Apostles. Nay, that even the mediæval Church was ignorant of its own power to originate new revelations, but considered rather that Novelty was a sure sign of heresy. Here then we have a problem, an acknowledged variation between Apostolic teaching and Romish teaching; we have a theory of development offered us as the solution of that problem. It is a theory, however, not countenanced by Scripture, but anathematized thereby; not known to the primitive Church, nor the mediæval Church, except as a sign of heresy; not sustained by miracles, nor any other supernatural evidence.

It rests, then, for its proof purely on its own reasonableness. Is it then, as it ought to be, if candid men are to receive it, the most reasonable and the most obvious thing imaginable? Surely it is strange, if so, that it should be

so lately discovered. It is an assertion that Revelation must grow as natural science grows. But is not this, to keep out of view the essential idea of a Revelation? What do we mean by a Revelation? In one sense, all knowledge is revealed, for all light comes from the Father of lights. But God communicates knowledge in different ways. Some truths we learn mediately by inductions from facts, by weighing probabilities, by comparison of ideas, by deduction from general principles of nature.

But there are other truths, which, from the character of their subject-matter, could not be learned in this way : such *e. g.*, as pertain to His own essence and attributes, and to the life beyond the grave, which yet it exceedingly behooved mankind to know, and which He has in His mercy condescended to teach us, by express oral or written messages. If a man deny that in this last sense a Revelation has ever taken place, we know what he means, he is simply an infidel. But if he admit that this has been done, then he acknowledges that God does communicate religious Truth in a way different from, and opposite to, that by which He teaches Natural Science. Science, as it has been well said, is a revelation *in* and *by* the reason, the Gospel is a revelation *to* the reason. To obliterate this distinction is in its effect to destroy all religious faith.

But, before the misguided follower of these new lights reaches that quagmire of rationalism towards which they guide him, observe into what odious and irreverent positions he is conducted. Christian knowledge, say the advocates of Development, is ever advancing. St. Paul, then, knew less than St. Athanasius, and St. Athanasius less than St. Bernard, and St. Bernard less than St. Alphonsus Liguori, or Dr. Newman. Nay, that is far from being the entire anti-climax. St. Paul, who was so ignorant of truth and

duty as to rebuke the Primate St. Peter openly, and to tell him that he erred—St. Paul, who knew of but one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus—St. Paul, who seems to have relied as little on the Virgin Mary to assist in his salvation as on any woman then unborn—St. Paul, who believed that all Christ's people when absent from the body are present with the Lord, instead of being racked by the intolerable pains of Purgatory—this man was on Romish principles not only a less enlightened and less accurate teacher than Dr. Newman, but he was a less informed Christian than the least and lowest of Dr. Newman's disciples; than the merest girl fresh from a convent; than the rudest and poorest Irish labourer, who commits his departing soul to the Virgin; nay even than the Italian bandit who kneels before an image while waiting for the traveller whom he intends to rob or to murder. Whatever the *practices* of these men may be, if the Theory of Development be true, their *knowledge* of Christian doctrine is greater than that of any ancient Father, than of any primitive Saint, than of any even of the exalted Twelve who saw and heard the Lord of life Himself, and whom He promised to guide into all truth. And what the most advanced Christian now knows of the Christian Faith is less than what a Tyro may know hereafter. To-morrow there may be new discoveries in Christianity. The next steamer may bring us in addition to the price of cotton and the number of killed and wounded in another battle on the Danube, intelligence of a new article of that Faith without believing which a man cannot be saved. His doctrine may be sufficient to-day, but when he goes abroad to-morrow he learns that there is another Development which he must believe or be lost. He is exposed to be anathematized, not on the old ground pointed out by St. Paul, that he has

received another Gospel, but on the exactly opposite ground, that he would not receive another Gospel. Where is all this to end? What sort of religion will Christianity be when fully developed? "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Let us, my brethren, devoutly thank God that we belong to a Church that adheres to the old landmarks, and is content to be no wiser than the Apostles, and which enjoins on all its ministers and all its members to contend strenuously for the *Faith once delivered to the saints*.

Rationalistic Development.

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VII.

RATIONALISTIC DEVELOPMENT.

"Beware, lest any man spoil you, through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." COL. II. 8.

THE subject to which I am now permitted by a merciful Providence, and by the kindness of the founders of this course of lectures, to invite your candid and earnest attention, is *Rationalistic Development*.

In approaching this difficult and important theme, it is my fervent prayer to Almighty God that the Holy Spirit may so direct our thoughts and rule our hearts as to render the present occasion largely profitable to our souls, and widely promotive of his glory; and this for the sake of Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord and Saviour!

At the threshold of our inquiries this primary question presents itself:

What is Rationalism?

Rationalism is the attempted supremacy of reason in religious matters. It is the *attempted*, and not the actual, supremacy; since, from the very nature of the case, every effort to bring the infinite within the compass and dominion of the finite will ever prove a signal and instructive failure.

The renowned reformers, Luther and Calvin, had not been long resting in their graves, when the churches of

Europe were startled and appalled by such annunciations as these from the mouths of Faustus Socinus, and the author of the Racovian Catechism, Valentine Smalcus, the revivers of the ancient Arian heresy, which insists that there was a time when the Divine Word, the everlasting Son of the Father, did not exist: "To admit any doctrines which are contrary to common sense, we neither can nor ought to be induced by the express words of the Spirit of God himself."* "Whatever opinion agrees not with reason is inadmissible in divinity."†

The next generation heard still more hardy and irreverent declarations; for Simon Episcopius, an Arminian divine of Holland, thus dogmatizes: "Whatever the reason of man finds out to be false, is on no account to be considered as true or right in religion."

With the noted polemic, Dr. Joseph Priestly, this was a favourite maxim, as unsound in principle as it is daring in spirit: "It is now time to lay less stress on the interpretation of particular texts, and to allow more weight to general considerations, derived from the whole tenor of Scripture *and the dictates of reason*, and if there should be found any difficulty in accommodating the one to the other, the Scripture, and not reason, should remain unaccounted for."‡

These bold assertions of influential and leading Rationalists very clearly discover the principle on which they insist the interpretation of the written word of God and all religious investigation should be conducted; that the judgment of our reason must in every case be regarded as decisive and supreme.

If this is in brief a just definition of Rationalism, we may now introduce to our notice another inquiry:

* Socinus.

† Smalcus. Smith's Scrip. Testimony to Messiah, Vol. I. p. 68.

‡ Hist. of Corruptions of Christianity, Vol. I. p. 261.

What is Development?

In itself, Development is simply a gradual unfolding. It is not a creative act, but a successive opening and increase of something already existing; while in its manifestations, Development is as various as are the things, which by degrees unfold themselves and come to perfection. The seed develops itself into the plant. The acorn develops itself into the oak. The bud develops itself into the leaf. The blossom develops itself into the fruit. The child is developed into an adult. But as in these familiar instances of development there is no new act of creation, so there is no change of the original essence. No species ever commingles and becomes identical with another. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"* "Can the fig-tree bear olive berries? Either a vine figs?"† In the vegetable world no such transmutation and confusion ever occur, but each kind of plant, grain, and tree invariably produces its like.

In the animal kingdom, the same undeviating law of succession also prevails; physiologists and anatomists searching in vain for an example where a race has unfolded itself into a new one. Nowhere within the sphere of the world's observation does one form of life pass into some other. Vegetables never become animals, nor do brutes lose their nature, ascend in the scale of being, and obtrude themselves into the ranks of humanity.‡

Such is Development as it exists in the material creation; and hence we may expect that the same impossibility of blending diverse natures prevails, as an inexorable law, in every other department of existence.

* Matt. vii. 16.

† James iii. 12.

‡ Baron Cuvier, Murchison, Charles Bell. *Indications of the Creator*, by Geo. Taylor.

With these preliminary observations, we are perhaps prepared for the reception of our principal question,

I. WHAT IS RATIONALISTIC DEVELOPMENT?

Development rationalistic is a theory devised by modern rationalists, of the perpetual evolution of new doctrine under new circumstances. It is the hypothesis of a developing energy in the Gospel, which incessantly moulds its original principles into novel forms of truth.

Thus Immanuel Kant, a most eminent philosopher of Germany during the last century, and a professed rationalist, proposes so to transmute Christianity as to free it from all old dogmas. "Mysteries must eventually pass into the form of moral notions by a metempsychosis, if they are ever to become intelligible. The Church creed contains within the germ of a principle, whereby it is urged to a continual and more close approximation towards pure ethics and religion, until at length these last being attained, the other will be superseded and dispensed with. The swaddling bands beneath which the embryo shot up to manhood must be laid aside when the season of maturity has come. The leading-strings of sacred traditions, which in their time may have been of service, grow by degrees superfluous."*

This theory of indefinite progress inherent in the very nature of the Gospel, is thus portrayed by the distinguished American divine who, in the metropolis of New England, once so eloquently advocated the modification of Christianity, called Unitarianism :

"In the times of the early Fathers, Christianity was in its infancy. The Apostles communicated its great truths to the rude minds of Jews and heathens, but the primitive Church did not, and could not, understand all that was

* Kant's Religion within the Boundaries of Pure Reason, Pref. & B. 3, Apot. 1, § 7.

involved in those principles. In the first age, the religion was administered with a wise and merciful conformity to the capacity of the recipients. With the progress of intelligence, and the development of the moral faculties, Christianity is freeing itself, and ought to be freed, from the local, temporary, and accidental associations of its childhood.”*

According to this theory of Development, Christianity is not so much a body of definite doctrine, as an embryo principle, or a prolific *idea*, yielding diversified products, branching into many species and varieties, and manifesting itself under endless modifications; and yet under all these infinite forms retaining its original and divine character. Of course, at its commencement, Christianity was not fully, but only partially revealed. As a truth it was only a seed, out of which it was subsequently to grow until it reached maturity. To Jesus of Nazareth and his Apostles, God imparted his will in such a form, that from it succeeding ages can develop other truths, and this indefinitely, as their aspirations prompt, or their exigencies require.†

This is the aspect of Rationalistic Development as professed by the followers of the German philosophers, Kant, Schelling, and Hegel. But in France, and among the admirers of the Eclecticism of Victor Cousin, Rationalistic Development exhibits still another phase.

In the assuming and erroneous language of the disciples of this school, “Intuition is a direct manifestation of truth. Everything of an intuitional character *unfolds itself more and more* in the individual. In proportion as our spiritual nature is brought more into harmony with truth and with

* Dr. W. E. Channing's Works.

† Letters on Development, by Rev. Wm. Archer Butler, D. D.

God, will there be a *clearer reflection within us of divine things.*”*

According to the imperious dogmas of this popular and aspiring modern Platonism,† we are able by a kind of intellectual vision, to soar, not only above the world of sense, but beyond the sphere even of our personal consciousness, and boldly to place ourselves at the very centre of Absolute Being, with which indeed reason is to be regarded as identical; and then from this central point surveying essential existence, and its various relations, we can next unveil the nature of the Deity, and fully explain the derivation of all things which have been created by the Infinite!‡

As a necessary consequence of this refined and subtle theory, whatever in the Scriptures agrees with our innate sense of absolute truth, we are for this cause to believe; while everything that does not receive the spontaneous assent of our reason, or rather is not suggested by this faculty, we are to reject; the primary intuitions of the soul, and their independent deductions, constituting both the standard and the measure of religious truth.

Rationalistic Development, then, as the twin offspring of Rationalism, forms with its parent a tri-corporal monster; like the horse leech and her two daughters, “a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the Lord’s poor from the earth, and needy and perishing souls from among men.”§ The voracious mother takes her stand upon experience, making this the criterion

* Morell, *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 199, 200.

† Plato taught, that the soul was an emanation from God, and that human reason was therefore identical with the Divine. From this single fragment of ancient alloy, how many attenuated and brilliant leaves have been beaten by philosophical and theological artisans!

‡ Sir Wm. Hamilton’s *Review of Cousin’s Philosophy*. *Edinburgh Review*, October, 1829.

§ Proverbs xxx. 14.

and test of all truth, while the not less sharp-mouthed daughters, abandoning the ground of empiricism, maintain a different doctrine: the German child, that the Gospel is only an incipient fundamental idea or principle, a nascent thought; the French bantling, that all possible knowledge both of truth and duty is inherent in reason itself.

Thus diverse in the times of their ascent from the smoke which arises from their subterranean father-land (for Rationalism assumed its name about the middle of the seventeenth century, while its progeny, dualistic development, is the portentous and desolating infliction of the eighteenth and nineteenth), the maternal parent, and her legitimate offspring, clothe themselves with very different garbs of personification.

Sometimes Rationalism presents itself under the veteran form of grim and sturdy Deism, armed *cap-a-pie* with infidel objections, bristling with mighty difficulties, and marching heavily and sternly forth with sword, and spear, and battle-axe, to wage a war of death and extermination against every revealed truth.

But now Rationalism, the warrior and crusader, has disappeared. He is no longer a Bolingbroke, a Voltaire, or a Paine; but he moves in our midst in a clerical habit; gravely ascends the pulpit; opens the printed Word of God; mysteriously waves over it his magic wand, which he calls Accommodation; solemnly informs us that, by this linguistic necromancy, he has banished from the sacred page every superhuman presence, whether angelic or Divine; and, with the air of an oracle, assures us that the Book now speaks only as Plato and Socrates might have spoken, had they enjoyed the clearer light and superior illumination of the present century!

Finding, however, that the common sense of mankind must ever hold this as an undoubted maxim: the lan-

guage of the Old and New Testaments is subject to the same fixed and unalterable laws as govern the language of all other books, and that, therefore, the inspired writers spoke the words of truth and soberness, or else there have never been any such words in the world, Rationalism shuts the Bible in disgust and despair, leaves the Church, renounces Christianity, denies the independent and personal existence of God, and turns idealistic philosopher.

He retires to his study, and there thinks long and deeply upon the nature of his own soul; vainly hoping to find in its hidden depths something which will explain the mysteries of his own being, and the wonderful relations in which he stands to other things. At length, wearied with the double exercise of tasking his intellect and of watching the responses of his consciousness, he calls in the aid of his imagination, which soon enables him to congratulate himself upon the great and unparalleled discovery of an inward ear, hitherto unstopped, and, therefore, deaf, and of an internal eye, ever before shut, and, consequently, blind.

Rejoicing in the supposed possession of faculties which, by rendering all conceivable voices audible, and all possible truths visible and intelligible, open his soul to the whole universe of knowledge, he covets retirement and solitude, that, undisturbed by the occupations and distractions of the world, he may hold spiritual and elevating converse with nature and with himself. He withdraws to the fields and woods, and, with rapt delight, fancies he hears instructive teaching on all hands, and supposes he sees, with his new power of abstract perception, not only the modes, but the very essence of all beings; mistaking, all the while, the bewitching tune his imagination plays, for this universal music, and the illusive visions this wily enchantress displays, for this unlimited intelligence.

Thus it is, that Rationalism is, in its pervading spirit,

either Deistical, holding to mere Naturalism, although not utterly discarding the Bible; and then it is contentious and controversial, subtle and deceitful, acting the fierce and bloody assailant, or the cunning and adroit conjuror, as may best subserve its settled and relentless purpose of separating God and man from all intercommunion, and of hunting revealed religion from the earth: or Rationalism is Pantheistic, blending God and the world together, and deifying itself; and then, its self-conceit and its indifference to all theology, and to the distinctions between right and wrong, and good and evil, render it complacent and tolerant, courteous and blithesome; while its visionary tendencies conduct it into the region of the ideal, where, were there really no such things as Divine justice and holiness, and human depravity and responsibility, no eternal life nor eternal death for every imperishable soul; it might do but little harm in ballooning in a thin and sublimated atmosphere, disporting itself with its own fanciful creations and logical subtleties respecting necessity and spontaneity, myths and terminologies, quiddities and ontologies.

Were the Bible a lying fiction, and all revealed truth but a deceitful fantasy, we might innocently gaze in silence as the developing idealist

“Spreads for flight and fluttering his pennons,
Uplifted spurns the ground; thence, many a league,
As in a cloudy chair, ascending rides
Audacious into the wide expanse;
Or in the emptier waste, resembling air,
Weighs his spread wings, at leisure to behold
Far off the empyreal Heaven extended wide.”*

But we must turn our eyes away from such a melancholy spectacle, in order to inquire for

* Paradise Lost, B. 11.

II. THE SOURCES OF RATIONALISTIC DEVELOPMENT.

As, in tracing a river to its rise, we find that it does not originate in a single head, but in many springs and lakes, some near at hand and easy to approach, others more remote and difficult of access; so the sources of Rationalistic Development are multiform—a part of them obvious and immediate, while another portion is obscure and distant.

Beyond all question, the mad current is, at the present time, swollen to an overflowing flood, by the large infusion of the speculative philosophies of Germany and France. Further up the wild stream we can perceive Dr. Priestly and John Solomon Semler, the sophistical German theologian, and their followers, also the deists Gibbon and Hume, and the French materialists, pouring in their bitter waters; while, still more remote from us, Baron Swedenborg, a strange and visionary personage, wonderfully resembling the Arabian impostor, Mohammed, not, indeed, in warlike disposition, but in an insane and unbridled imagination, adds to the poisonous tide a crude and heterogeneous mixture of false philosophy, heretical Christianity, lawless interpretation, and sensual mysticism, under the form of pretended disclosures of Heavenly Secrets.

But we have not yet followed Rationalistic Development backward to its first gushing fountain.

It is remarkable that, in observing the prevalence of this specious and destructive error, as it now overshadows some portions of Christendom, we discover it in this country principally among the first settlers of New England, and among the emigrants from the land where Martin Luther distinguished himself.

How are we to account for this well-known fact?

The Pilgrims, who came to Plymouth Rock, brought

with them from England the theological views of the early Puritans in that island.

But that candid and truthful English divine of the *sixteenth* century, Richard Hooker, who was incapable of wilful misrepresentation, asserts, that the first Puritans, in common with the Anabaptists of Germany, maintained that it was "the special illumination of the Holy Ghost, whereby they discerned those things in the Word, which, others reading, yet discerned them not."*

Indeed, the declarations of the Rev. John Robinson, minister of the English congregation in Holland, to which the first settlers of New England belonged, are, in his farewell address, delivered when his flock was about embarking for America, even still stronger than the testimony of Mr. Hooker.

"If God *reveal* anything to you, by any other instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry; for I am verily persuaded. I am very confident, that the Lord *has more truth* yet to break forth out of his holy word. For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed churches, who are *come to a period in religion*, and *will go*, at present, *no further* than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw: whatever part of his will our good God *has revealed* to Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it. And the Calvinists, you see, stick where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented; for though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God; but, were they now living, would be as willing to embrace *further light*,

* Eccl. Pol. Pref. c. 3, § 10. Hartwick's Hist. of Articles, p. 96.

as that which they *first received*. I beseech you, remember, it is an *article of your church covenant*, ‘that you will be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you, from the written Word of God.’ But I must herewith exhort you to take heed, what you receive as truth. Examine it, consider it, and compare it with other Scriptures of truth, before you receive it. For *it is not possible*, that the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick anti-Christian darkness, and *that perfection of knowledge should break forth at once.*”*

Altogether, this is a most remarkable passage. Remarkable as disclosing the views of one of the founders of a wide-spread theology; remarkable as evidence respecting the religious opinions generally prevailing among certain classes at the period Mr. Robinson lived; remarkable as, without doubt, containing the germinant and prolific seeds of the pestilent errors which have grown so luxuriantly upon the soil where they were originally scattered; and remarkable for the high position it now occupies in the estimation of his successors and followers, who revive it in new editions of history, publish it as a doctrinal model,† circulate it in books of common instruction,‡ and, in not a few schools, require it to be carefully committed to memory,§ and thus virtually elevate it to the rank of a theological symbol.

As a dogmatic creed the passage embodies these several Articles :

* Winslow’s History, John Robinson’s Works, Vol. I. p. 44; Neale’s History of Puritans, Vol. II. pp. 146, 147.

† Robinson’s Works are published by the English Congregational Union and the Massachusetts Doctrinal Tract and Book Society.

‡ National Reader, by Rev. John Pierpont.

§ Rev. Joseph Emerson’s Questions to Goodrich’s History of United States, p. 28.

1. The written word of God contains truths concealed beneath the historical and grammatical sense.

2. In its literal sense, the written word of God is not perfect.

3. Revelation has not yet ceased.

4. Ministers of certain churches are now the recipients of Divine revelation.

5. Additional truths will be revealed.

6. The revelations of light from the written word of God are gradual.

7. Every minister is the judge of the revelation he receives.

8. His judgment is infallible.

9. The Christian religion is progressive, by means of the gift of new knowledge, from the Spirit of the Lord.

10. Every Christian person is bound to admit the truth of these nine assumptions.

11. All supplementary revelations he is likewise readily to welcome and implicitly believe.

12. Their reception and belief will greatly improve his spiritual condition.

13. By neglecting and disobeying them he will suffer a grievous loss.

14. Their rejection is a legitimate cause of grief and lamentation in every child of God.

From this parting discourse of Mr. Robinson to the company of emigrants to New Plymouth, it is evident that he regarded himself, and likewise Luther and Calvin, and indeed every other minister of concurrent faith, as the subjects of new revelations of truths from the Almighty; and that, in this respect, his was but the common belief of the community of which he was so conspicuous a member. It is also plain, that he expected still additional revelations; for he expresses his firm "persuasion" and strong "con-

fidence that the Lord has *more truth yet to break forth out of His holy word,*" by means of new disclosures. In short, Mr. Robinson was a believer in *the progressive development of Christian doctrine*; for he also bitterly complains that "the reformed churches would *go no further*, but had come to a period in religion," and likewise asserts that "it is not possible for *perfection of knowledge to break forth from the word of God at once*:" or, in other phrase, the word of God, in its literal meaning, is imperfect!

If the disembodied spirit of the Rev. John Robinson has, since its departure from this troublesome life, more than two centuries ago, been witnessing the changes which, during this period, have occurred in the theological world, he doubtless no longer bewails the want of progress in the reformed churches, as the advancement has been in a direction he least anticipated, and reached a limit which he most heartily abhorred, and most scrupulously avoided; for, at the present time, the deadly spirit of Rationalism, coeval in its manifestations with the Reformation itself, has, in the very country of Luther, in the city of Geneva, in the birth-land of the Plymouth pilgrims, and in their cherished home in this Western Continent, silenced the voice of true Scriptural teaching in thousands of pulpits, where once the Bible was by the ministers regarded and treated as the oracles of God, and by the people was received with undoubting faith, loved with glowing ardour, and obeyed with constant and unchanging faithfulness. Surely, the "period" to which some "churches" have at length come, is perpetually changing its position, and the stand-point they occupy is an ever-varying cycle.

As was inevitable, the revelations for which the pastor of the Leyden exiles hoped and waited, were eventually realized; not, indeed, in additional light from heaven, but either in the wild vagaries of an excited imagination, or in

the cold and paralyzing negations of a speculative naturalism.*

In deference, then, to the unerring voice of history, we are in sorrow compelled to believe, that the theology originally brought to Massachusetts, and there fostered in subsequent years, contained a deep infusion of Rationalism, and that this embodied and cherished heaven diffused itself, sometimes silently, sometimes loudly,† until the mass of the popular mind has been largely infected with the wasting heresies of Arianism and Pelagianism, Swedenborgianism and Humanitarianism, Transcendentalism and Pantheism, which, alas! have not yet finished their frightful work of infidelity and spiritual death.

That Martin Luther was himself, intentionally, a Rationalist, no one will assert; and yet it is undeniable that he held, published, and transmitted to posterity Rationalistic sentiments.

* About a century since, there occurred in this country the religious excitement which was familiarly called the Whitfield Stir. But, like Mr. Robinson, whose theological system he advocated, the Rev. George Whitfield claimed for himself a special revelation from heaven; for these are his own words: "My doctrines I had from Christ and his Apostles; *I was taught them of God.*"(a) "The Holy Spirit, from time to time, has led me into the knowledge of Divine things: and I have been directed, by watching and reading the Scriptures on my knees, even in the minutest circumstances, as plainly as the Jews were when consulting the Urim and Thummin at the High Priest's breast."(b)

Dr. Thomas Scott, the author of a widely circulated Commentary upon the Bible, employs language equally positive in reference to the Divine instruction he had himself received. "As surely as I believe him to be a God that heareth prayers: so surely do I believe that flesh and blood hath not *revealed* to me the doctrines I now preach, *but God himself by His Holy Spirit.*"(c)

† "Their precept" (that of the first settlers of New England), "like their example, speaking, as it were, from their sepulchres, is, to follow truth now, not as they saw it, but as we see it, fearlessly and faithfully."—*Justice Story's Misc.*, p. 61.

(a) Whitfield's Letters, 214.

(b) Account of God's Dealings, p. 34.

(c) Freee of Truth, Part III., c. 5. See also his Life, pp. 68 and 175.

With regard to ministerial inspiration, his views were identical with those of Mr. Robinson; for he thus records his "general deference to what the spirit teaches" at the present time, as he evidently believed:—

"Among Christians, it would be intolerable for one man to set up for master over others who *are taught by the same spirit*. It is enough to prove the spirits, whether they are of God; and *that* being once ascertained, *we ought instantly to show reverence*, to lay aside all magisterial airs, and *humbly to sit down as scholars*; for it is impossible for the *Holy Spirit to speak, without delivering truths before which every man should bow, and receive them with child-like simplicity.*"*

Luther was a firm believer in his own personal infallibility; a belief which is not only a material ingredient, but the very quintessence of all Rationalism. Thus convinced that his judgments were infallible, he rejected from the sacred canon two books of Scripture, that of Esther and the Epistle of St. James; while, moreover, he decided some moral questions in direct opposition to the command of our Saviour Christ.†

But if Luther claimed for himself infallibility, why might not any other divine, a Semler, or a Paulus, an Ammon, or a Strauss, do the same? If two books of the Bible can, by individual dictation, be deprived of their canonicity, why may not the whole sixty-six? If one mandate of the Lord may be disobeyed, why may we not disregard and repudiate all?

The removal of a single stone imperils the stability of the entire wall, and the first handful of snow taken away from the bottom of the mountain, may set in motion the

* Letter to Brentius. Luther and Lutheran Reformation, by John Scott, vol. II., p. 213.

† Sir Wm. Hamilton's Discussions, pp. 484–496.

overwhelming avalanche. It may be, then, that the Rationalistic principles unwittingly held by the Wittemberg Reformer, have ever since exerted upon German theology and the Teutonic mind a most pernicious influence, not only in Europe, but in this Republic. It may be, that the loud and shocking clamours now heard on all hands for the abolition of the Lord's-day, for the extinction of the Christian priesthood, and for the destruction of the Bible, are in reiterated and swelling echoes the doubts he whispered and recorded in his secret cloister.

But we are able to trace Rationalistic Development still farther back into the field of the past.

John Robinson was the follower of the Genevan Reformer, while both John Calvin and Martin Luther were, in many features of their theology, the disciples of Augustine, of the *fifth* century, the celebrated Bishop of Hippo, in Africa; who, when censured by Prosper and Hilary, the one a layman, and the other a Bishop of the Church in Gaul, for teaching his novel doctrine of predestination, while he admits the charge of novelty, defends his dogma on the ground that "*it was a revelation from God in answer to prayer.*"*

It is not then improbable, that the theological school, of which Mr. Robinson is a representative, derived their peculiar ideas of perpetual revelation from the African Bishop; while, likewise, as he must have been the sole judge of the revelations he received, inasmuch as he wrought no miracles to prove their divine origin, it may be, that from the same Augustinian source, the German Reformer deduced his assumption of personal infallibility.

As we ascend still nearer the Apostolic age, one other

* *Si orent eum qui dat intellectum, si quid de Prædestinatione aliter sapiunt, ipse illis hoc quoque revelabit.*—August. de Prædest. et Persever., lib. I. c. 1. *Oper.*, Vol. VII. p. 485. *Faber on Election*, B. 1, c. 8, pp. 110–112.

spring-head of Rationalistic Development reveals itself in the person of the noted Origen, of the *third* century, a Presbyter of the Church of Alexandria in Egypt.

Deluded by the Platonic philosophy which he adopted, and following the speculations of his own mind, he made additions to Divine revelation, by teaching the pre-existence of human souls, a notion recently revived in this country;* and their incarceration in bodies for offences previously committed, and that our senses pollute our spirits, and must all be mortified; while he perverted the Gospel of God by maintaining that all rational beings are restrained only by motives, the most powerful of which is punishment; and that God will thus ultimately bring all his creatures to be wise, holy, and blessed: the very seed-ground of modern Universalism.*

From this single line of historical investigation, it is clearly evident, that from a very remote date has this enticing heresy prevailed in the Christian Church: *revealed truth is a pliant mass, to be changed and modified either by increase or diminution, according to the notions of its professors.* The introduction of this false principle has been, and still is, the prolific source of immeasurable evil; for while truth ever tends to life, error, however small or however plausible, as inevitably works nothing but mischief and death.

Such, then, are the sources of Rationalistic Development.

III. HOW CAN THE THEORY, IN ITS VARIOUS MODIFICATIONS, BE PROVED TO BE FALSE AND UNTENABLE?

By showing that it stands upon an unsubstantial basis.

Rationalistic Development rests upon two assumptions: the assumption of boundless capacity in the human soul;

* The Conflict of Ages, by Rev. Edward Beecher, D.D.

† Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. (Murdoek's Edit.), Vol. I. p. 178.

and the assumption of imperfection in the Gospel revelation.

1. The first foundation upon which Rationalistic Development rears its towering superstructure, is then the assumption of unlimited power in the human mind.

To the intellect of man Rationalism attributes an ability which cannot be proved to exist.

How do we know what powers the human intellect possesses? Not from speculation, but from consciousness. Our mental faculties, whatever they are, cannot be constructed by our ingenuity, like a machine, but they exist already in their completeness, and can, therefore, only be observed and watched by the inherent power of consciousness; while the results of these conscious observations, constitute all the knowledge we can of ourselves have of the mechanism of our souls.

But such profound philosophers as Socrates, Aristotle, and Pliny, such wise sages and spiritual Christians as Tertullian and Augustine, Chrysostom and Lord Bacon, Sir Isaac Newton and Bishop Butler, were not conscious that their intuitions unfolded themselves more and more; they were not conscious of possessing the faculties Rationalistic Developers attribute to the human intellect; nor is the mass of mankind thus conscious; and if these faculties are not conscious and provable possessions, they are no faculties at all, and have no existence save in the imaginations of a few idealistic dreamers. Indeed, it is not too much to say, that not a single one of these speculatists is himself conscious of having a mental power by which he can survey and compass the Absolute and the Infinite; while again, if no man has this ability, it is a nonentity, so far as we are concerned, and its existence is incapable of proof.

From this infallible testimony of our consciousness, it follows that Rationalistic Development, so far as it is built

upon a false system of mental philosophy, is but the "baseless fabric of a dream;" and therefore should not disturb us, save with deep regrets that it has so many attached professors and enthusiastic admirers, who, by their delusion, are estranged from Christ, and deprived of the blessings of His salvation.

In despite, then, of the laborious efforts of Rationalism to exalt the office of reason, and even to elevate the faculty to the rank of a god, this mental instrument remains unchanged in its nature, and occupies the exact position it has always occupied. By its own admission, it was of old finite, ignorant, and weak, and unfit to be our highest religious guide; and the lapse of centuries has added nothing to its essential compass, knowledge, and ability. As formerly, so now, reason "by searching cannot find out God," cannot discern His nature, cannot fully discover our relations and duty to Him, cannot clearly determine His mind towards us, and, therefore, by its ignorance, weakness, and perversion, reason demonstrates the necessity of a Divine revelation and of superhuman assistance. After all the Rationalistic speculations and boasted developments with which the world has so long been deluded, reason is no new faculty, nor is it capable of performing any new work; but it is precisely the same thing it always was, and has now assigned it by its Divine Author the identical duties which were ever required of it.

What, then, is the legitimate office of Reason, in connexion with the recorded oracles of God?

In view of the finite character of all our faculties, and the revelation contained in the Old and New Testaments, as a limited and unchanging collection of positive objects, lying absolutely beyond our natural observation, and for a knowledge of which we are wholly indebted to Divine con-

descension and testimony, the legitimate office of reason in connexion with the truth and church of God, can, by the similitude of a learned Swiss divine of the last century,* be thus illustrated :

A King sends one of his officers to a province with authority to govern it in his name. After a time this Governor allows himself to be ensnared and perverted by a faction. Hence the affairs of the province are very badly administered, and all things are thrown into confusion. The sovereign being well apprised of all that had happened, and perceiving that the government had not the wisdom and firmness, the energy and authority, requisite for remedying the disorders of the province, and restoring it to peace, sends a Deputy Extraordinary, and gives orders to the Governor to submit himself entirely to this Deputy, and to take no measure without his direction. The Governor's first duty is to ascertain whether the superior minister be really sent by the King ; for unless he have satisfactory evidence of this, he would be guilty of treason in yielding to the stranger the authority which the sovereign had committed to him. But when he sees the sign-manual, and the other unquestionable attestations of the royal commission, he immediately delivers up all his own powers to the Deputy, and submits in all respects to his arrangements and decisions. Now, if I should ask, From whom does the Deputy hold his authority over the province ? From the King who sent him, and whose commission, signed and sealed, he has in his hands ? Or, from the Governor, who, on the production of those documents, received him with due honour and acknowledgment ? Every man of common sense will say, From the King surely ; for to suppose the other would be absurd.

* Samuel Werenfels, Professor of Theology at Basil, who died in 1740.

The application of this parable is plain. The gracious and Almighty God has given Reason to man for the guide of his conduct through life. But Reason has submitted to be corrupted by sin; and man, therefore, is fallen into a state of extreme misery. God, of his infinite goodness, has had mercy upon man; and seeing the insufficiency of Reason to restore him from his fallen state, and to deliver him from his misery, has sent Revelation, and has given orders to Reason to yield obedience, and to take no part in directing the conduct of man except what Revelation may assign.

What, then, has Reason to do in this case? First of all, she must examine whether this, which claims to be a Revelation from God, is indeed such; for if she have not satisfactory evidence of this, she cannot, without criminal rashness, surrender her own authority, which the Creator has invested her with for the government and guidance of man. But as soon as she is satisfied from indubitable proofs, that this is indeed a Divine Revelation, she yields without delay, and if Reason be indeed *rational*, submits herself entirely to the WORD OF GOD.*

With regard, then, to revealed truth, the first legitimate office of reason is most obviously this: To examine the credentials of the men who profess to address us in the name of Almighty God. These credentials are, the miracles they wrought, and the prophecies they utter: a true record of which is contained in the genuine and authentic written documents of the Old and New Testaments.

Having satisfied itself from an unprejudiced scrutiny of the evidences of Christianity, that this religion is supernatural in its origin, reason then must proceed to ascertain

* Smith's Scripture Testimony to Mess'ah, Vol. I. pp. 76-7.

the meaning of the inspired oracles, defend them from the assaults of enemies, harmonize their truths, and show their practical application to our hearts and lives.

When reason executes this fourfold office, the religious work God assigns this faculty is fully accomplished; because it is unable through its weakness, perversion, and ignorance, either to unveil the invisible, to discover the truths the Bible discloses, to investigate their nature, to judge of their wisdom, or to pronounce upon their importance. Reason, when faithful to her duty, conducts us to Revelation, existing only in the Old and New Testaments, and opens for our admission the door of the Divine sanctuary, where she commits us to the arms of faith, and leaves us under her empire; attending us afterward only as a subordinate servant, and not as a sovereign master; a submissive assistant, and not as an authoritative judge.*

2. The other pillar on which the theory of Rationalistic Development founds its edifice, is the assumption of imperfection in the Gospel revelation.

In the theory this imperfection is itself inferred from two analogies: the one imaginary; the other inadmissible and without force.

We have heard the German Rationalists pronouncing Christianity to be the "germ of a principle," and a budding idea, thus assuming that it is imperfect; and they attempt to justify this assumption by appealing, first, to alleged imperfections in the material world, and then, to the actual imperfection of the previous religious dispensations.

In the hypothetical philosophy which underlies these assumptions, all things have emerged from a chaotic and unfinished state by gradual processes.†

* Bp. D. Wilson's *Evidences of Christianity*, Leet. 23.

† Lamarek, a French Naturalist, and his followers. *Vestiges of Creation*, and *Edinburgh Review* for January, 1845.

Thus in several departments of natural science, especially in Geology and Astronomy.

From the researches of Geologists these infidel philosophers endeavour to prove that all the present forms of animal life, not excepting even man himself, have proceeded from lower and imperfect forms, and that in this way all preceding beings originated, back through an indefinite series of successive production, till we reach the primitive energizing chaos itself.

From the discoveries of Astronomers, Rationalists conclude* that the whole universe once consisted of attenuated, cloudy matter, out of which the heavenly bodies, planets and stars, have been gradually evolved. Thus finding, as they suppose, essential imperfection in all material things, they infer that the Gospel itself must in its nature be a chaotic seed or a curdling sun.

But a profounder Geology† and a higher Astronomy‡ is demonstrating, that neither the teeming chaos, nor the nebulous material out of which worlds are conglomerated, has any existence but in the brains of these shallow philosophers. Geologists cannot discover any blending-races of animals; nor can Astronomers bring within the reach of their keenest vision the slightest indication that there are progressive formations among the bright worlds beyond the skies.

The analogy, then, which Rationalists attempt to establish between Christianity and the material world, is wholly imaginary, and consequently does not in the smallest degree sustain the assumption that the Gospel revelation is imperfect.

An attempt is likewise often made to prove the Gospel

* Nichols' *Sidereal Heavens*.

† *Foot-Prints of the Creator*; by Hugh Miller. Sir Charles Lyell's *Geology*.

‡ Sir John Herschell.

imperfect, on the ground of the allowed imperfection of the preceding dispensations, the patriarchal and the Mosaic.

The patriarchal religion was imperfect, and therefore introductory to that of Moses; while his as incomplete was the precursor of the Christian, and as a consequence this also partakes of the character of its predecessors, and is of course destined to pass through the stages of infancy, childhood, youth, and manhood, until it attains its perfection, and is succeeded by something else.

This is the logic: but it is wholly inadmissible, and without force; inasmuch as it is defective, and contradicts the positive declarations of our Lord and his inspired Apostles.

As a logical sorites, the reasoning is inconclusive; since it is very far from being the case that all things which for a time move in a series continue to do so indefinitely. Although all vegetables and animals grow for a time by seasons and degrees, their growth has a fixed limit, beyond which they cannot pass; so that, instead of inferring the farther advancement of Christianity from the diminutive size of its predecessors, we may rather conclude that this is itself the perfection after which they aspired; that Patriarchism was the child, Judaism the youth, and Christianity the full-grown and finished man.

But the logic is not merely defective; it also conflicts with the express assertions of our divine Saviour and his holy Apostles.

This is the wonderful promise of our Lord to his chosen followers: "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you *all* things; he will guide you into *all* truth."*

St. Paul thus records the fulfilment of this promise:

* John, xiv. 26, xvi. 13.

“Jesus Christ hath *abounded* towards us *in all wisdom*, having made known unto us the mystery of his will.”*

In his address to the elders of Miletus, this Apostle utters these declarations: “I kept back *nothing that was profitable* unto you; I have shewed you all things.”†

These Holy Scriptures prove that the Apostles both received and communicated “*all*” the truth which it is “profitable” and necessary for us to know, that the Gospel contains *all* this necessary truth, and that therefore it is actually, as it is termed in the New Testament, “the *perfect* law,”‡ and the “*perfect* will of God.”§

Illogical as well as useless is it then, when Inspiration itself pronounces Christianity “perfect,” to argue its imperfection from the imperfection of the patriarchal religion and Judaism. The Gospel might indeed have been imperfect; but, since it is not, it is beyond our power to overthrow the fact by a deduction drawn from a mere conceivable possibility.

Thus Rationalistic Development shows itself both unphilosophical and antisciptural; for it contradicts our observation as well as our consciousness, to whose authority we must defer or annihilate ourselves; and it conflicts with the revealed word of God, whose testimony we must receive, or renounce the truth of all history.

The assumption therefore of the imperfection of the Gospel dispensation being in all respects untenable, Christianity, as an objective revelation, is not the feeble “germ of a principle” to be developed more and more by circumstances and the exigences of its possessors; but Christianity is a finished and glorious galaxy of positive truths, each as complete and entire at its first promulgation as it ever will

* Eph. i. 8, 9.

† James i. 23.

‡ Acts xx. 20, 35.

§ Rom. xii. 2.

be. Christianity is not an "embryo shooting up amidst swaddling-bands and leading-strings," each of which is to be laid aside as it advances in size and height; but Christianity is a final and perfect creation, and, like its Divine Author and Founder, is ever the same, "yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and therefore is without either infancy, manhood, or old age, except in reference to the flight of time, and the reception it meets with in the successive ages of the world.

As a perfect creation, the Gospel is complete in itself, having neither deficiency nor redundancy. The finished work of God, the Gospel neither requires additions of any kind, nor allows either contraction or diminution; for, in this divine system, nothing is superfluous, nothing is wanting.

As the creation of God, the Gospel is perfect, just as the human frame is perfect. In the human body there are no superfluous limbs, no superfluous members, no superfluous senses. On the other hand, the body has no deficiencies. It needs neither an additional head, nor an additional eye, nor an additional heart, nor an additional faculty or instrument of any sort. Should any part of the human body be removed, it would to that extent be maimed and rendered weak and impotent; while if it should receive additions, it would not only become a monstrosity, but be deprived of a measure of its strength, activity, and power.

The perfection of the human frame does in all strictness illustrate and define the perfection of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In it there is nothing local and temporary, accidental and transient. His Gospel has no non-essential truths, no unnecessary institutions, no useless officers, no dispensable sacraments; for, as God is the author of every portion of the Gospel, his infinite wisdom cannot have erred in making any part in vain. Every doctrine, as well as

every outward ordinance, is his creature, and as such is no more to be retrenched and cast aside than are our arms or our heads, should we either in our stupidity or in our madness attempt the suicidal or the murderous process.

On the other hand, the Gospel admits of no additions. With the inspiration of the Apostles, the inspiration of the new dispensation for ever ceased;* so that, since the completion of the canon of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit has communicated no additional truth whatever, either to individual Christians or to the Church, whether particular or universal. We are no more to expect a Divine novelty in the Gospel than we are in the human body. In each have all creative acts absolutely terminated; and therefore, in each do all things remain as they were at their original formation. Hence, there can be no development of Christian doctrine, in the sense, either that God imparts truth not contained in the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, or that the Holy Scriptures enclose a hidden meaning, deeper than the historical and grammatical interpretation—a spiritual meaning, revealed only to fervent suppliants; for, not till the anatomist shall develop some new sense or some new faculty in the human body, will either philosopher, theologian, assembly, synod, council, or

* “In the *primitive* times, the Holy Spirit fell upon believers, and they spoke in tongues which they had not learnt, as the Spirit gave them utterance. These were signs suitable to the time. For it was right that the Holy Spirit should be borne witness of in all tongues throughout the whole world. *That testimony having been given, IT PASSED AWAY.*”—*Augustine, In Evan. Johan. c. 4, Tract. VI. § 10.*

“Let no one, therefore, brethren, say that, because our Lord Jesus Christ *does not now do these things*” [miracles], “therefore he prefers the former times of the Church to the present. For there is a passage, in which the same Lord sets those who do not see and yet believe, before those who believe, because they see.”—*Idem, Sermon. 88, de Verb. Evan. Matt. XX. § 2.*

“Of miraculous powers *not so much as a single vestige* remains.”—*Chrysostom, De Sacerd. lib. IV. c. 3.*

college, develop any new Christian truth. Guided, as we must be, exclusively by the historical and grammatical sense, we may indeed, by diligent and prayerful study, discern in the Gospel, truths before unseen by us, and of these truths, we may, almost to an indefinite extent, make new applications for instruction and edification, for reproof and correction, for encouragement and comfort; but these new perceptions and these new purposes to which we apply the word of God, no more create the truths we discover and employ, than we create our bodies, when we investigate, for the first time, their intricate and wonderful construction, or use them in ways we had previously neglected. The Gospel is absolutely perfect, completely finished, symmetrically entire, wanting nothing, and has been ever since the last Apostle "fell on sleep and saw corruption;" just as much so as was the human body, when, in the first Adam, its almighty and all-wise Creator pronounced it "very good."* This being the case, all theological eclecticism, gospel reform, mystical interpretation, and new articles of faith, is creation-mending, as superfluous and unnecessary as it is arrogant and sacrilegious.

What though an Augustine and a John Robinson, a Whitfield and a Thomas Scott, and many others, assert, that, to them, truth has "broken forth" from the written word of God, and been "revealed to them by the Holy

* "A complete man is neither destitute of any part necessary, and hath some parts, whereof, though the want could not deprive him of his essence, yet to have them, standeth him in singular stead, in respect of the special uses for which they serve; in like sort, all those writings which contain in them the Law of God, all those venerable books of Scripture, all those sacred tomes and volumes of Holy Writ, they are with such absolute perfection framed, that in them there neither wanteth anything, the lack whereof might deprive us of life, nor anything in such wise aboundeth, that as being superfluous, unfruitful, and altogether needless, we should think it no loss or danger at all, if we did want it."—*Hooker's Eccl. Pol.* B. I. c. 13.

Spirit?" we are still obliged, while we admire the sincerity and devotion of these distinguished men, to believe that they were, in this opinion, deluded and mistaken.

The inspiration of which the Holy Spirit is, at the present time, the author, is not intellectual, but only moral. None but Prophets and Apostles ever received from the Holy Ghost intellectual illumination; for the sole object of the grace others possess, is not to render us either revelators, or unerring doctrinal critics and infallible expositors, but to remove moral darkness from our fallen nature, to teach us self-knowledge, to open our eyes to our own utter corruption and weakness, to dispel all delusive dreams concerning our own innate goodness and sufficiency, to cast down every high imagination, and to show us feelingly and practically our wretchedness through sin, that we may, with thankful and eager desires, welcome the great salvation the Son of God offers us.

In the language of the eloquent Bishop Heber :* "By its agency on the natural faculties of the soul, the internal and ordinary influence of the Holy Ghost supplies us with recollections, ever seasonable, to support or to subdue our weak or rebellious nature; it hallows our thoughts by attracting them to hallowed objects; it strengthens our virtuous resolutions, by renewing on our mind those impressions which gave them birth; it elevates our courage and humbles our pride, by suggesting to our recollection, at once, our illustrious destiny and the weakness of our unassisted nature."

By itself it teaches nothing, but without its aid all human doctrine is but vain. It is this which gives life and strength to every truth which we hear; this which imprints on our soul, and recalls to our attention, those sacred principles

* Bampton Lectures, pp. 320-323.

to which our reason has already assented. Distinct from conscience, but the vital spark by which our natural conscience is sanctified, it both enables us to choose the paths of life, and to persist in those paths; and though, like the free and viewless air, it is only by its effects that we discern it, *it is the principle of our moral, as the air of our natural health*; the soul of our soul, and the shekinah of our bodily temple!

But, by itself it teaches nothing. It prepares our hearts, indeed, for the word of life, and it engrafts the word in our hearts thus opened; but, *that living word and whatever else of knowledge we receive, must be drawn from external sources.* "Faith," we are told, "must come by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" nor can we hear "without the voice of a preacher."*

The inspiration of religious perception and memory, God's ordinary grace, induces the soul to behold the truth of those doctrines which external opportunities of knowledge offer to her understanding; it preserves and refreshes in her memory those principles of action, of which we have already perceived the force; it is the blessing of God and his pervading energy which prospers to our salvation what we learn, and what we have learned; but, *when we pass beyond these limits, we invade the regions of miracle and prophecy; and it is no less inaccurate to suppose that in the ordinary course of things we receive a new idea from the grace of God, than it would be to maintain that our knowledge is derived from the lamp that lights our study.*

Like that lamp, the grace of the Most High enables us to trace, in the oracles of salvation, the things which belong to our peace; like that lamp, it helps us to renew the decayed impression of knowledge long since obtained; and,

* Romans x. 17.

without such heavenly aid, the unassisted soul would be as unequal to the pursuit or perception of her eternal interests as the unassisted eye to read in darkness. *But, whether by celestial or earthly light, we can only learn from that which is before us ; and the one can no more be said to communicate a new revelation to our souls, than the other to place a fresh volume on our table.*

I do not say that grace does not possess an active power, which not only enables us to attend and recollect, but frequently compels our attention and recollection. Nor am I rash enough to deny that God may, by any operation or any medium whatever, communicate to our souls, when he thinks proper, any imaginable, or, to us at present, unimaginable knowledge. But this may be without offence maintained (and I am the more anxious to state it clearly, because it is this particular point on which enthusiasm is most frequently mistaken), that it is by the *illustration*, not the *revelation of* truth, that God's Spirit ordinarily assists us ; and that the latter is one of those cases of Divine interference, of which neither the present age of Christianity, nor, perhaps, any preceding age since the time of the Apostles, affords us an authentic example.*

* “ *The effects of the Spirit, as far as they concern knowledge and instruction, are not particular information for resolution in any doubtful case, for this were plainly revelation, but, as the angel which was sent to Cornelius informs him not, but sends him to Peter to school ; so the Spirit teaches not, but stirs up in us a desire to learn : a desire to learn makes us athirst after the means ; and pious sedulity and carefulness makes us watchful in the choice, and diligent in the use of our means. The promise to the Apostles of the Spirit which should lead them into all truth was made good unto them by private and secret informing their understandings with the knowledge of high and heavenly mysteries, which had as yet never entered into the conceit of any man. The same promise is made to us. For, what was written by revelation in their hearts, for our instruction have they written in our books : to us, for information, otherwise than out of these books, the Spirit speaks not. When the Spirit regenerates a man, it infuses no knowledge of any point of faith, but sends him to the Church and to the Scriptures. More than this, in the ordinary*

Not merely Augustine and the men who embraced his doctrinal views claimed divine inspiration in support of their system, but the same pretensions are urged by their opponents, Lælius Socinus and John Wesley, and even by the infidel Lord Herbert. But the Holy Spirit cannot be the author of conflicting and irreconcilable revelations; and therefore we are compelled to deny the special intellectual illumination from on high of every man, no matter how respected his name, and great his influence in the world, until he proves by miracles that he speaks by the movement and suggestion of the Holy Ghost.*

But after all, is there no such thing in Christianity as *Admissible Development*?

This question receives, in part, its true answer from Vincent of Lirins, a Gallican Father of the fifth century, who, when he is interrogated, "What! nothing new? Must there be no proficiency, no improvement of religion in the Christian Church?" thus most ably replies: "Yes, without doubt, very much; but, then we must be sure not to *change* Christianity, under pretence of improving it. To improve anything to the utmost, is to enlarge it to the just standard and perfection of its own nature. It is the duty of every Christian *to increase and grow in understanding, knowledge, and wisdom*, but he must continue a Christian still; the growth must be natural, *in one and the same kind of faith, in the same meaning, and in the same mind*. The Christian *faith* must never admit of any alteration in its essential properties, either by augmentation or diminution, but its definition or essence must always continue one and

proceedings of the Holy Spirit, in matter of instruction, I yet could never desery. Which I do the rather note, because by experience we have learnt, how apt men are to call their private conceits the Spirit."—*Golden Remains of the ever-memorable John Hales of Eton College*, 1659, p. 14.

* Falser on Election, pp. 59–65.

the same. Method, beauty, and clearness, and such kind of embellishments, may be added to the word of God, but then every kind must continue distinct and entire in its own proper nature. Succeeding ages may set off, file, and polish the ancient *doctrines*, but they must never change, never retrench, or mutilate anything, *the doctrines may admit of more evidence, clearness, and distinction*, but they must be *inviolably preserved in their full, entire, primitive perfection.*"*

The development of which Vincent thus speaks is evidently *intellectual* development, an *increased knowledge* of revealed truth. This kind of development is not only allowable, but also obligatory, as we are commanded by an Apostle to "*grow in the knowledge* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."†

But St. Peter also says in the same passage, "Grow in grace," and therefore there is still one other kind of development which the Gospel permits and binds upon the conscience of every one of its professors. It is *practical* development. The embodiment and manifestation of Christian truth and holiness in our dispositions and conduct; increasing appropriation by us of the grace of Christ; and advancing growth in him. This species of development we practise when we possess and cultivate the Christian virtues: when, in obedience to the injunction of St. Peter, we "*add to our faith*" these other fruits of true religion, divinely engrafted in our hearts, "*virtue and temperance, patience and goodness, brotherly kindness and charity.*"‡ when, (as we pray he may,) God "*increases in us his manifold gifts of grace, and we daily increase in his Holy Spirit more and more.*"§

Of more developments than these two, growth in know-

* Commonitory, chaps. 28 and 29.

† 2 Peter i. 5. 7.

‡ 2 Peter iii. 18.

§ Confirmation Office.

ledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and growth in grace, Christianity knows nothing. If we seek for others, we shall open the door to every species of error and fanaticism; we shall leave the narrow and safe path our Saviour Christ hath marked out for us to walk in; we shall depart either to the superstitious traditions of Romanism on the one hand, or to the freezing abstractions of Rationalism on the other; we shall be recreant to the faith of Christ crucified; we shall show ourselves untrue witnesses, and unfaithful keepers of Holy Writ; we shall expose ourselves to the malediction of our sovereign and jealous Lord, who will not give his glory to another; "If any man add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city."*

In vision St. John saw war in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon and his angels, and prevailing over them. The same war is there now on earth, and it will be waged with the same victorious results. It is a contest between the Messiah and Satan, between the Church and the world, between faith and reason, between truth and error, between holiness and sin.

Though our enemies may not yet be the Gog and Magog of Divine prophecy, yet Infidelity, with its Rationalistic equipments, is not only the boastful Goliath who defies the armies of the living God, but also the desolating Babylonish invader, who defiles the Lord's sanctuary, and fills Jerusalem with the slain of his people.

Pledged to your incarnate and glorified Saviour by your baptismal vows, as many of you are, beloved brethren, beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain

* Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ; and fight manfully under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

For this trying strife and dangerous warfare, take to yourselves the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in these evil days. Clothed with his panoply—truth and righteousness, the peaceful gospel, a shielding faith, and the hope of heaven—wield these assailing instruments; for they are the sword and arm of the Spirit, the word of God, and the power of prayer; and you shall, like Michael and his angels, prevail and conquer, through the might of the Captain of our salvation; who is with us in all our perils, and achieves our conquests for us. Thus, fighting the good fight of faith, laying hold upon our eternal life, and continuing Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto your lives' end, you shall have the fruition of the reward he promises to unfailing zeal and devoted service, to triumphant success and exterminating victory—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sit down with my Father in his throne."*

May this bliss and glory be ours, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

* Rev. iii. 21.

The Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

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VIII.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

THE Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, duly considered, presents itself as a Fact, and as a Doctrine.

The subject ranks, most properly, among the Evidences of our Faith; and yet it is one with which the *Infidel* can have no rightful concern. It is only when any man has admitted the *fact of a revelation*, and that the Bible is its *reliable Record*, that he can in reason ask: What is the true character of the Book which thus attests and accompanies this revelation? Is it, though an authentic, still, only a human record of a Divine dispensation? That is, such a record as any man, with full intellectual and moral, but yet strictly *natural* qualifications, might have made, if his own observation, or the reliable testimony of others, had given him the requisite knowledge? Or, is the Record *itself* the *Word of God*? Did *He* write the histories? Did *He* record the oral teachings? Did these lessons of doctrines and duties, these prophecies of things future, come to us, in matter and form, from God? Is this *His* word, or *man's* word? In the Bible, does God speak of Himself to man? Or does man speak to his fellow man of God? Is this Book the product of human genius and piety, working *naturally*, though extraordinarily? Or, did God *inspire*

certain chosen men to utter His word, using special human minds *supernaturally*, sometimes as His instruments, and sometimes as His agents, to give to His truth a sure and accurate utterance and record among men?

These inquiries may be fairly made by any one who has come within the domain of belief, by accepting Christianity as Divine, and the Bible as its true record. But, in the mouth of unbelievers, all such questions are premature, and therefore must be only cavils and snares. In a word, Inspiration is not one of the outer defences of the fortress of our Religion; it is one of its inner strongholds, of its holiest shrines. The believer will approach it, as such, with great reverence and care. Investigation, nevertheless, is here, as on other points, his duty. He needs it for the enlightenment of his own faith; and still more for its defence, just now, chiefly against men who, whether they know it or not, are foes to the truth; whose entrance among us is insidious, and whose real end, if not their conscious aim, must be, to betray this sanctuary, of which they claim to be the only wise defenders. It is maintained, therefore, that a hearty acceptance of the *facts* of the Sacred History as real, of the Bible as their Record, and of the Revelation as supernatural, must precede any honest inquiries about inspiration, its *nature*, *proofs*, and *limits*.

A preliminary glance at these will open the whole subject to us.

To prove the fact, and, still more, to enable us to realize the nature of Inspiration, we must retrace the ground over which the argument for the fact of a *Revelation* would have carried us. For, Revelation is one fact and Inspiration is another; and we must, in discussing them, sever two things which our religion and our ordinary thoughts blend very much into one. There is *Revelation*, when God speaks to

men without using any one or more men specially to receive and convey His message. There is *Inspiration*, when His Spirit uses human spirits—whether or not these act consciously or with full intelligence—as His means of sending His word to other men. For example; God spoke audibly to the Israelites under Mount Sinai.* *That* was mere Revelation. He also frequently spoke to them through Moses, whose spirit God's Spirit taught and used. *This* was Inspiration, as a means of Revelation. Again, God wrote fearful words on the wall before the eyes of the feasters in Babylon!† That was an act of Revelation; or, rather, would have been exclusively such, if the written words had, at once, expressed their true import to the gazers: while His making known to Daniel the hidden meaning of the words was Inspiration. Balaam‡ was unwillingly, and Caiaphas§ unconsciously God's prophet; and both, though in the very act of sin, were inspired to utter His Truth.

A voice from heaven, or words or symbols written there with a meaning clear to men, would be a revelation from God. But when God supernaturally selects, informs, and attests one man as His medium of communication with other men, then He *inspires that man* for such special use and occasion. He may reveal through this inspired man, a special, temporary command; or some precept or truth of permanent authority; or some warning of events yet to come. Or He may so inform or direct the mind that the historical record shall answer its special end, and be guarded from all error. He may direct His messenger to use symbols, or *spoken* words, or *written* words. In any case

* Exod. xix. and xx.: and Deut. v. 4.

† Dan. v.

‡ Numbers xxiii. and xxiv.

§ St John ii. 49-52.

the word is from God,* and is made to come accurately and definitely to us. Thus God spoke to men supernaturally, and through some chosen individuals of the race.

These men, and their natural powers and personal acquirements and habits, God prepared, and then used supernaturally to give through them a sure and definite utterance, by speech and by pen, to that truth which man needs to know, and in the various ways by which he needs to learn it: and what remains to us now in Holy Scripture is God's Record of the past, and His perpetual announcement of what we are to believe, to do, and to look for. The Divine and the human elements are both real in that Book. The Divine element makes it an instruction entire and infallible. The human element makes it available to men, and adapts it to all their wants. Now there are, we thus see, *a Fact to be proved*; and a *Doctrine to be explained and defended*.

Assuming then here that *a Revelation was necessary*,—a point attested by all history, by the ceaseless yearnings of man's heart and the struggles of his intellect, and by his hopeless failures in every effort of his own to find any satisfying, permanent solution of his spiritual difficulties; and, simply suggesting that the significant fact—that God sends to us all His precious gifts by the hands of a chosen few, whom He appoints and enables to work for the many,—affords fair presumption that any Revelation would come to the whole race through the agency of some persons specially qualified; and that for a work clearly supernatural, the qualifications must be supernatural; we may claim all the reason of things, and the full analogy of nature and Providence in favour of the theory we have proposed, as consistent with a sound philosophy.

* See Bp. Horsley's Sermons (XV. & XVIII.) on 2 Pet. i. 20, 21.

We will pass at once to inquire into the *fact*,—*Has* God taught men by spoken and written words of Inspired Truth? What are the proofs?

In the two centuries preceding the present, unbelief denied this fact, as neither proven nor possible. Now it generally admits the fact, but puts forth a doctrine which nullifies it. To indicate, then, what seems to be the true way of proving the fact against any who resort to the old method of denying it; and, still more, to quicken in the mind *the true idea of Inspiration*, we must (as was before said) cast our eyes over some of the ground which an argument for a *Revelation* would traverse. God chose to effect the Revelation by the supernatural inspiration of some individuals of our race: hence the proofs of both facts are very much the same.

The true, direct proof of Inspiration is such as this:—Here, before and among us, is the Church of Christ, the visible Body of the professors of the Faith. Nothing can be made historically more certain than that this Christian Church has existed for more than eighteen hundred years. No other fact of history is so certain, save it be the continuous existence of the race of man. The language of an infidel historian best expresses our whole idea: * “The Christian Republic, which gradually formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman empire.”

And second to this fact in certainty, and only second to it, is the further fact that she has always had a book—this book, the Bible—in her safe-keeping.† Her records prove when and how she *received* it, and how carefully she has *preserved*, and how deeply she has always, everywhere,

* Gibbon’s “Decline and Fall,” &c., chap. xv.

† See Hooker Eccl. Pol. bk. III. viii. 14, and Butler’s Analogy, Part II. ch. i., and his sermon on Matthew xxiv. 14.

and by all her members, *reverenced* it as God's Book. No other book has been so received and kept, or has so come down to us. Choose which you will as the most esteemed, best proven book of all antiquity, it has next to no proof along side of this, the Book which the Church has kept.

In an argument against unbelief of any grade, in behalf of the fact of a Revelation given by means of Inspiration, we need present the Church only as a well-organized, permanent human society, which has all along faithfully discharged the office here attributed to her. As Christians, discussing among ourselves this question of Inspiration, we might rightly go further, and claim reverence for the testimony of the Church as the Divinely constituted and commissioned Conservator and Witness of the Inspired Word among men. But in either view, this Church of Christ offers proofs regarding the authorship, preparation, delivery, reception, and preservation of this Book, or rather collection of books, such as can be adduced for no other book extant, dating even a century back. Apply to the New Testament (and the same is true of the Old Testament) every criterion by which the most cautious historian can now test any ancient record of the history of men—apply it with the utmost stringency, and the Sacred Record will triumph by means of the proofs which this Society, the Church, brings out abundantly on every necessary point. Hence, if there be anywhere *any* trustworthy history of facts, we have one *here*. For these books and their authors were fully believed in at the first. Those who knew all about the men and the facts, trusted both. These books are the accredited writings of the accredited witnesses, by eye and by ear, of all they record. This permanent, Sacred Society accredits the books and the writers. She testifies that both came to her with unmistakeable, super-

natural attestation from God ; and that among her perpetual offices, is this one—to bear such testimony to all men through all time.

And new *doctrines*, offered as from God, come to us *inseparably interwoven with the facts* of the history. Whoever pronounces the doctrines to be wilful deceits, must deny the facts. By no rules of fair criticism can the history be accepted as true, if the doctrines be rejected as impostures. Some of the Books* record lessons of doctrine, at first taught orally,† others profess to be direct written lessons of truth from God, through those writers whom He commissioned and inspired to write them. And these doctrines are, I say, inseparably interwoven with the facts of the history, the history of the inspired teachers, of the deeds done by them and their associates, and of the times in which they lived. If they are wilfully false teachers, they cannot be reliable historians ; but if their *facts* be accepted, their doctrines cannot be torn loose and rejected as deceits.

Many, moreover, of these facts are miracles—unmistakable proofs of superhuman agency. Of these miracles many bear too evidently the impress of Heaven to be attributed—even if viewed apart from the doctrine they attested—to any evil power. But taken—as all the miracles must be taken—in the strictest union with the doctrines, these two—the miracles of mercy and the doctrines of truth and holiness—mutually attest each other. Disparage the doctrines or the miracles as any one may, we must feel as the first converts did, that *Satan* never devised those *doctrines* ; *man* never wrought those *miracles* ; and, therefore,

* The Gospels and the Acts.

† 1 Corinthians vii. 10, 40, and 2 Peter iii. 15, 16, on the exclusive sense in which the word “Scripture” is used in the New Testament. See Wordsworth on Inspiration, &c., pp. 200 and 203.

the union and mutual attestation of such miracles and such doctrines, prove that God gave both. It was He who wrought, and He who spoke. The act, and the word—written or spoken—were His. From no *one* source save God could the two, the doctrines and the miracles, have come forth thus inseparably tied together. Nay, the doctrines and precepts, viewed by themselves, must be from heaven. Earth had never conceived such truth or such virtue before. Man had done his best, but he had never at all approached this system of belief and duty, so evidently not of any earthly origin. Any how, it never could have had any alliance with imposture, or received any support from the powers of evil. The attesting miracles must, then, have been real and Divine. They were the finger of God affixing His name, and setting His seal to the doctrines and precepts *as His*. The document and the seal confirm each other's genuineness. In either we see God. In both united, we see such proof of His direct intervention as makes unbelief folly.

But further—What do these writers *claim for themselves and their books in this respect?*

The facts and the men are proved to be above all suspicion. Their pure doctrines and holy precepts make all supposition of wilful deceit impossible. Their miraculous proofs exclude not only *this* supposition, but also any idea of unconscious, enthusiastic error. God will not attest *any* kind of error. What character, then, do these writers claim for their teaching?—"We speak (say they) not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth"*—"When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word

* 1 Cor. ii. 12.

of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God”*—“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”†

Such is their claim, often repeated, in behalf of the *word spoken*, and the *word written*; and that such a claim was so made by men commissioned openly, as they were, by God, is proof that the claim is just. That this claim was admitted by tens of thousands *then*, at the cost of every earthly interest, and of the abandonment of all other previous belief or unbelief, shows how overwhelming the proofs must have been. That then, and all along, since, and now, the purest affections of the heart, and the noblest faculties of the intellect of man, whenever and wherever he has appeared most like God, have accepted and adopted these truths and precepts as most worthy of God as their author, and as meeting all of man’s moral and spiritual wants, and answering all the demands of his purest reason—this voice *from within* proves that He made the Holy Scriptures who made *us men*. And when we look out over men and their doings, and God’s Providential government, and see these truths and precepts ruling all that is noble and enduring in the world, conquering every foe, and elevating every friend and disciple, then we see that the Holy Scriptures must have come from Him who rules the world and dispenses its blessings. True enough; a bitter contest against this truth—*of the inspiration of the Bible*—has been ceaselessly maintained. The evil heart of unbelief, now coarse and vulgar, and now crafty and polished in its assaults, has been ever assailing this claim of the Bible to be, in a sense exclusively and peculiarly its own, *God’s Word*. Unbelieving minds are misled, and timid ones dis-

* 1 Thess. ii. 13.

† 2 Timothy iii. 16. The force of the passage is the same wherever the verb “is”—which is not in the original, be supplied in the translation. “The whole Scripture is inspired of God, and is,” &c.,—or “The whole Scripture being inspired of God—(*i. e.* because it is, &c.) is also profitable,” &c.

heartened; but, age after age, all comes to nought; and whatever form, or whatever course of opposition such infidelity may adopt, all history is ever proving that "who-soever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."*

But here the question is rightly asked—"How does God inspire men?" What is the mode—the process, so to speak, by and in which God inspires, breathes His Spirit into some men's minds, thereby making them *His prophets*? The right answer to such a question is not merely a point of interest, but one of great practical importance; because (as was before said) the fashion has grown up to grant the fact of a Divine Inspiration, but then so to explain it and account for it as to leave us no one Book of God, no sure, sacred standard of Truth. A century since, unbelief confessed itself Deism, or even Atheism. It knew no religion, and often no God. But man's heart recoiled from a thing so hideous. Nations under its sway were perishing. New forms of unbelief had therefore to be invented; or, more accurately, old and forgotten ones had to be revived; less revolting, but in fact not, in the end, less deadly. A most subtle and plausible form of unbelief now assails Revelation at this vital point of its *special* Inspiration; and serious-minded men regard this assault as highly perilous because so craftily concealed. What this false philosophy is, can be made clearer after we have seen how the true believer would regard and speak of Inspiration.

We know that God revealed His will by visions and by voices, by granting special, fore-appointed signs, and by angelic messengers. Such are the express assertions of Scripture; and as they admit of no denial, consistent with any acceptance of the history as true, so, once admitted as facts, they seem

* St. Matt. xxi. 44.

to us to require no special explanation, because they so much resemble our sensible modes of communication among ourselves.

But God's Spirit also acted directly and immediately on the *Spirit* of the man inspired. "For the prophecy or teaching ['of Scripture'] came not ever—at any time—by the will of man—but holy men of God spake, being moved (or borne onward) by the Holy Ghost."*

How, precisely, the Holy Ghost actually affected and used the minds and faculties of His prophetic agents, we are not told, and therefore we cannot tell. But this, though a *mystery*, is no objection to the *fact*; for we have the like mystery and fact united in our daily experience and intercourse one with another. We feel and know that among us *spirit* acts on *spirit*. We can, it is true, name some few instruments or media used; as, for example, words to the eye or ear, symbols, gestures, and the like. But reflection will show us that this use of material things to enable spirits to communicate with each other only adds to the mystery. And why is it that thought and feeling will flash in the eye, and deep or wild emotion pervade the crowd, by (what we call) sympathy? Who can tell why or how? No one. The rationale men give of such things, if it ever be more than words, merely tells of a step or two in a process whose real nature we can never fathom. And who knows not that thoughts and feelings of good and evil come—he cannot tell how—but it seems as if spirits brought them to his spirit? And what Christian does not delight to believe that the Holy Spirit of God and pure angels speak with his spirit, to warn and encourage? Then there is no reason why we should doubt that, even in ways and measures beyond these, a *special* and *peculiar* action of the Holy Spirit on cer-

* 2 Peter i. 21. See Bp. Horsley's 15th sermon, and in it his view of the prophets' inspiration.

tain human spirits may occur; that He may select and prepare some few men to be the Channels of His Truth to all men. Things as certainly as this within the spiritual world, and as really beyond our power to explain, do occur to ourselves every hour. There is no inherent contradiction in the act, and all mere difficulties cease before Omnipotence. So that, really, reason has not one well-grounded doubt to urge when the fact is asserted by men attested as the sacred writers were.

And what can the infidel say in explanation of the fact that prophecies have been uttered and verified? One prophecy, full and minute, and clearly beyond the reach of human sagacity to devise or created power to accomplish, proves, when the accomplishment has come, *that God has spoken to man, and through him to his fellow-men.* Now we have many such prophecies: and, just as easily as prophecy, may also doctrine or precept be communicated from God.

Further—in these acts of Inspiration, God has selected, as we might expect that He would, the men and the modes best suited to His various purposes. Different agents were chosen, who were used in different ways, according to the occasion and service. Sometimes we see that the very words were dictated; at others, the form of the message partook of the peculiarities of the messenger. Nay, evidently, these messengers were often chosen because of their special qualifications in temper, intellect, or talent for a proposed work. Their individual peculiarities were not obliterated, but were regarded as the reason for their selection by God for special kinds of work. Truth and duty have very various parts and aspects, and men vary much in their needs. In religion, as in everything else, God mercifully regards every man's wants, and sends what is necessary to each nation and to each man, in the way and through the agency by which it can be best transmitted and received.

Therefore have we the *four* histories of Christ, by four authors, differing entirely in natural endowments and temperaments, as well as in training and attainments. They wrote each to meet the wants of different classes of men and of minds, then and to the end of time. Yet their distinct portraitures of the Divine Original, and their independent records of His acts and teachings, all make up the grand unit. The whole man of each author is seen in his work, as fully as though he wrote of his own unguided motion. And yet the One Spirit is seen in every line. The Saviour of men, His example and lessons, are presented in all their aspects, and the needs of all souls of men are supplied, for the Author of all truth teaches all men through those whom He inspires.

So, too, have we Paul and John, Peter and James,* all distinctly marked as *men*, and not less as *authors*. Their office was to declare and enforce the doctrines and precepts of the new religion. To each one of them had that religion come home with an influence suited to the needs of the man. Each looked upon the new faith with his own eyes, and took it into his own heart; and each one taught and wrote as he saw and felt. And yet, none the less, God taught in and through them all, because he would so meet the wants of all men to all time; so that the subjective faith which justifies man, the heavenly love which sanctifies him, the burning zeal which will energize in men's hearts and regenerate the world, and the holy obedience which at once demonstrates man's faith and renders honour to his God, might ever be uttering forth the voices which men would need and long to hear, some one voice and some another; while all the voices together made up the *one* harmony of Inspired Truth.

* See Westcott's Gospel Harmony, pp. 28-31.

Thus, every endowment and even every peculiar characteristic in an inspired messenger would be needed. Nothing but infirmity was unfitted for some work or other, in some quarter or other, of this prophetic and inspired teaching of men. Hence, in the Old and New Testament writers we see every variety of endowment and attainment. We note the most marked intellectual and ethical peculiarities; and yet every one seems, as is really the fact, chosen to do some special office needed by some peculiar classes of men whom God would instruct. Not the less did the message come, in every case, by the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, true as He who sent it. Human infirmity was never allowed to mar one lineament of Divine Truth. The message was true in its substance and in every expression of it.* And the Fabric of all necessary religious Truth was thus completed. The Master-builder gave each man the work he was best fitted to do, and the material most suited to his special task. Lookers-on see only men running hither and thither, as though confusedly pursuing disconnected or inconsistent aims. But each one is on his own right errand, and his work is appointed him. He may not himself know all or much about its proper share or place in the edifice, but He who plans and controls sees the end from the beginning; and a glorious, a perfect, and an enduring structure is the result. So is it; and so Faith and Reason see it to be in the Blessed Book of God.

Faith and Reason, I say, for they both must unite to make up man's belief. On this point they ought to receive *the fact of inspiration*, as true of all the books of the Holy Scripture, and as true of every part of them all, as guaranteeing on God's authority the accuracy of all the history, the obligation of every command, the truth of every doc-

* Bp. Horsley, Ser. XVIII.

trine, and the certainty of every promise or prophecy. Inspiration, to be real, must control even every word; *not* so as in any sense to make it not the word of man, but to make it also so to be *God's* word as to be the most apt and direct, and profitable expression of the Truth; so that, truly interpreted, no word is superfluous, and none can mislead.*

And yet the inspiration is not mechanical. It does not make the inspired man to act as a machine; but always as an agent whose nature still works according to its laws, though for the time and occasion lifted up to an use which it could not fulfil without the extraordinary motion of God's Spirit.†

A lower theory than this may, and often does, consist with a sincere faith; but must keep it, I believe, in continual peril. To illustrate this peril, and thereby to prove that, since in these days we are compelled to have some philosophy of inspiration, we can be safe in no lower theory than such an one as has been now advocated, I will exhibit two other views held by honest, hearty believers of our own age. They will pretty well fill up the space between the true philosophy on this point, and the scheme which I shall afterwards describe and oppose as rank unbelief, poorly disguised.

The less objectionable of these two views comes to us

* Hooker Eccl. Pol. B. V. 21 : 2 & 3. "The word of God is His heavenly truth touching matters of eternal life revealed and uttered unto men; unto Prophets and Apostles by immediate divine inspiration, from them to us by their books and writings. We therefore have no *word of God* but the Scripture." "The word of God for the Author's sake hath credit with all that confess it (as we all do) to be His word; *every proposition* of Holy Scripture, *every sentence*, being to us a principle."

† See Westcott's Gospel Harmony, pp. 225, 226, for "Seven Propositions" drawn from "the primitive teaching on Inspiration."

with the sanction of one,* whose genius and sincerity all acknowledge.

He avows his deep faith in all the cardinal doctrines of our religion, and finds in the Holy Scriptures all the guidance his soul craves from God. He insists on the agency of the Church and the Ministry as essential to the Blessed Spirit's work in enlightening us. And yet his theory of *Inspiration* is one which would expel such faith as his from most minds. He regards the Bible as only a human record of a Divine Revelation; though a very reliable record, and one made under clearly Providential ordering. No words in it are properly God's words, unless where the fact is specially stated in any case. The historical books may, nay, do contain errors, and are marked by the mistakes and discrepancies to which historical writing is ordinarily liable. The Epistles in the New Testament seem to have no very definite authority; and to be consistent he can allow them none properly Divine.

We are to test all Scripture by our own "secret communing;" and by such a use of it to draw forth gradually whatever in it may be true, or suitable and useful to ourselves. God's will and truth are to be gathered from the tone and spirit of the Bible as a whole, not from any explicit, authoritative statements, save the few specially declared to be made in His words. There are such direct messages, however; and therefore the fact of a plenary Inspiration is fully allowed. But its universality is denied. Parts of the book, so far from being His, are erroneous. Nay, some parts are perilous to good morals and true belief, for precepts, examples, and teachings, are not merely recorded historically, but commended (by implication, at least), which yet our conscience and reason must reject. The

* Coleridge's "Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit."

Apostles treat as facts the fancies and popular traditions of their nation. Thus, human agency brought all its usual infirmity with it into the preparation of the Holy Scriptures. The divine element is not merely conjoined with the human, but perilously confused with it. The "treasure is in earthen vessels" in such a sense that few men would recognise, as Coleridge did, that therewith is also that "excellency of power" which can come from God only.

Most of the objections which Coleridge brings against the theory which has been now advocated, and which he confesses to be that sanctioned by the highest names in all ages, lie in fairness only against misconceptions or misstatements of it, not against a living Inspiration dwelling in the whole written Word, in the Church, and in each believer. *Such* an Inspiration does not "petrify" Revelation, but while it recognises in it, as in the Incarnate Word, a definite human form, it makes that form one of beauty and of active life. It suggests no idea of an "Automaton." It does not confound all truths and facts as of one measure of value and importance. God uses here human skill and art, as various as that which works and refines the metals He hides in the mines of the earth. The iron and the gold are equally of God. Rudely wrought or elegantly moulded, both are still equally His, and have their separate and most valuable uses for man. So is it in His Book; and in this view we cannot "worship" the mere letter, for we see the Living Spirit. We cannot make the Truth to be a dead thing, wholly external and objective, for we hold that the same Spirit dwells now in the Church and in ourselves which wrote the word and put into it an imperishable life and power. Nor would any sober-minded believer impose on others his own philosophy of Inspiration *as an article of faith*, though he must contend earnestly against any

philosophy or any point of faith which tends to make men nullify all creeds. The theory commended in this lecture, acknowledging as it does in all its fulness the human element in God's Word, gives free scope, nay utters solemn command, to the human mind to study and investigate the Written Word with all zeal and holy boldness. God's Spirit and man's must and will witness together in such right study. Intellect and heart will so advance farther and deeper into the truth of Heaven; and the Bible will have all—nay more than all—the freshness and power which other theories vainly profess to secure it; while the scepticism and pride of the human heart will be quelled by the full presence of the Divine Spirit.

A sadder illustration still of the peril of a lax or wrong philosophy of Inspiration is given by a recent *Essayist*,* more bold than reverent, and more misty than instructive. If Divine Inspiration be anything real, his view of it, indefinite as it is, is very irreverent. It is a fearful indication of the downward tendency of rationalism even in the Church, that her ministers can so think and write.

The inspiration of the classic poet (he tells us) and of the pagan oracle was as real, nay essentially the same as St. Paul's. The great Apostle acknowledged this to be so, when going forth among the heathen to preach the Gospel, he advanced his claim as a teacher inspired from Heaven. He then only recognised and perpetuated the old heathen idea as true. The inspiration of the devotee of Bacchus he claimed to have been the influence of his own Divine Master, and therefore to be now active in himself; the only real difference being that the gift was now more abundant. Where reverent believers have been wont heretofore to see human fraud or diabolical aid, there we are henceforth to

* Rev. F. D. Maurice, "Theol. Essays," Ess. XIII. on "Inspiration."

believe that the same Holy Spirit was working whose guidance we had deemed God gave to His Church and people through Prophets and Apostles, as it was given to no men by any other agency. Because the *word* "inspiration" is applied sometimes to the ordinary grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit, as offered to all who seek Him, therefore there is no such thing as an extraordinary illumination constituting the *Prophets*. The gift is the same. Nay, worse yet. When the fanatic exhibits fierce zeal, and carries away the people, we are not to deny his claim to the true Inspiration, but are to warn him of the sin and peril of abusing his high gift, or rather his large measure of the gift all have, did they but know it. The "poets, prophets, priestesses" were inspired as truly, though not so fully as Moses and Isaiah, as Paul and John. Fanaticism is Inspiration misused. The humble reader of the Bible is inspired—not merely *as truly* (this we believe), but in the same way and sense, to understand what he reads now, as the writer was inspired to pen it. Where and how then, are we to be *assured* of the truth? All men are inspired. So are all books. The Bible is only chief among books; not *the Book*, as none besides can be. "Common books and the chief book, nature and grace, earth and heaven," are before us all, that we may learn thence how to be saved. Alas! for the perpetuity of the Gospel among men, if this were their view of its inspiration. Blessed indeed are they who can hear or read and believe, without any philosophy consciously developed, if the science of theology must thus undermine the foundations of everything distinctive in Christianity, and make the "testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of prophecy," a mocking delusion to bewildered man!

Such as these, then, being evidently the only theories which an honest belief can devise, besides the one already

advocated here, are we not shut in to the stricter philosophy on this point as the only true and safe one? It is not within my plan to offer any detailed proof of it from the Scriptures. These directly assert,* what the example of our Lord† and His Apostles‡ in quoting and arguing from the Old Testament clearly teaches, that each word contains as its sense and design, *God's Truth*. The whole method and agency were just what, so far as our own reason can judge, were the best for us that our God could have adopted, and most like all His works of love for man. Objections vanish when men come to reason fairly, or to be content not to know what they cannot comprehend, or to await in this, as in all things else, the growth of our knowledge. *God spoke and wrote*; and despite all the changes and chances of time, and the sins of men, He has by the hands of His Church brought His Word safely and purely to us of this age. And it comes to us now not a dry, dead thing, but still cherished and illustrated by His Church, and still quick and lustrous with the life and light of the Blessed Spirit who first indited it. That same Spirit still dwells in the Church and in each believer; and by all the means which nature and grace provide for us, He makes the true meaning of the word He wrote clear to the Church and to each true heart. And so shall it be to the end of time.

All this is, of course, denied by that avowed Infidelity which rejects Revelation. But there is a subtler unbelief, which, on this point of *Inspiration*, professes and denies in the same breath. It claims its place among the phases of belief; but we have seen how the two theories already noticed cover all the ground short of Infidelity. Both these

* 1 Cor. ii. 4, 13; Heb. iii. 7, 13, 15; Eph. iv. 8, 9.

† St. Matthew xxii. 31, 32; and 43-45; and St. John x. 34, 35.

‡ Acts ii. 34; Rom. iii. 10-18; Heb. ii. 8, 12, 27, &c. See Gaussen's *Theopneusty*, ch. vi. sec. 5.

acknowledge the fact of supernatural Inspiration. The former of them confines it to *some parts* of the Bible, while the latter extends it far and wide *beyond* the Bible and the Church, into all kinds of religion, and, it would almost seem, into all departments of human knowledge. The philosophy next to be examined lies beyond these theories; though in many points it is not unlike the latter of them, the chief difference being that it more boldly and consistently advances to the legitimate consequences of its own principles, and denies that there is or can be anything supernatural in Inspiration.

This subtle unbelief—this rationalistic philosophy* of Inspiration, though a favourite and prevalent form of Infidelity just now, is really but an old error revived.† It doubts not (it says) that the Sacred Writers were *inspired*; but “So,” it adds, “many men besides have been; that in truth *all* men are so in a measure.” Such theorists accept and extol, and misuse that right philosophy of man’s nature which attributes to his spirit a higher faculty than merely that intellectual power which skilfully constructs a complicated machine, solves an abstruse problem in exact science, or comprehends a fact with its proofs and consequences. Man has within him (they rightly say) a power to conceive and to accept truths, that need and admit no demonstration—the great first principles of truths of every kind. Their abuse of this true philosophy is, that they make *this spiritual faculty within*, and *not the voice or teaching of God’s Spirit from without*, the source of Inspiration. Religious Truth (they say) can address itself only to the “Intuitional Consciousness,” not to that logical understanding which can take cognisance of a *fact*, or hear enunciated

* For a full exposition and able defence of it, see Morell’s “Philosophy of Religion,” ch. vi.

† See Gaussen’s Theop. ch. v. sec. 2, XLIV.

from without a law of duty, or a principle of truth, and the reasons and applications of both. A Revelation cannot embrace objective truth, nor any instruction, nor any proofs by argument. "Inspired Logic" (to use their own term) is an absurdity. Thus, the only inspiration is, that God's Spirit awakens, purifies, and elevates some men's "intuitional consciousness," so that they can achieve in *a very high degree*, what *all* men do in *some* degree, and what all holy and thinking men do in a good degree—they *see truth, for they see God*. Inspiration is an extraordinary elevation and energy of man's *natural* powers, specially aroused by God's Spirit. There is *nothing supernatural* in the influence or the result, nor can there be any supernatural indication of the fact to others not specially inspired. There is nothing *generically* different between the inspiration of a prophet or an apostle, and that of the man who may be sunk almost to the level of the brute.* Hence, even when the specially inspired person speaks or writes, his can be only a human and fallible utterance of the more or less inspired conceptions of his intuitions. How much of Divine Truth there was in those conceptions originally, how far his sins blot or his words distort them, I can only guess according to their agreement or disagreement with *my own* intuitions.

Therefore "Scripture"—that is, a *writing*, a *book*—can never be in any sense *inspired*. It is, at best, an authentic, human record of facts of history, and of the spoken lessons of men supposed to be more or less specially awakened to see truth: or some of their letters, penned by chance and as occasion suggested, and worthy of much regard as valuable relics of wise men, of whom we think

* Hence those who boldly and consistently pursue the theory to its legitimate results, regard and speak of our Blessed Lord as specially Divine, only because pre-eminent among holy and wise men, in that excellence of which all good men partake.

it probable that more than in most of their fellows, God awakened their natural power to see truth.

But no voice or pen of man ever transmitted from without to me any indubitable, explicit word of God. What men more prophetic—more inspired, *perhaps*, than I, have said or written, may help to elevate my intuitions towards the high level of theirs; but there can be no such things as *creeds*, out of the Bible or in the Bible. Doctrines are statements of facts, which I am to credit if my own intuitions conceive or perceive them to be true; but *no* testimony nor argument is to convince me. So with all parts of religious truth or duty. Inspiration is entirely *subjective*; its germ exists in *every* man; and there is no *external* revelation from God. There *cannot*, according to the laws of my nature, any voice of God come to me *from without*; and all that men the most fully inspired can do for me, is to speak and write *their ideas* of the Divine and True, as they best can—being only men, whose utterance is unassisted, unguided from on high.

Hence Inspiration is *a kind of genius*. Man's intuitions, not God's communications, are the beginnings of religious as of all other truths. Any man might be thus specially inspired were his moral nature duly elevated; and he might be a prophet too, if his circumstances were such as to call forth the truth from within him: that is, Inspiration is, after all, only *genius turned God-ward*. Poetry, philosophy, science, and art are of the same parentage as what *we call* Revelation. Whatever their differences, they do not differ in their *origin and nature*.

Now this is, I believe, a fair statement of this—not new—but resuscitated philosophy of Inspiration in its most favourable form. That it always sinks rapidly and surely into the most utter unbelief, is itself a strong proof of

its falsity. But to consider it in this least objectionable form :—

All error has some truth to begin with. So in this case, the philosophy of man's nature is, as has been already conceded—on the whole, the right one. The evil begins in the erroneous application of that philosophy to religion. For we, too, believe that to man's spirit are directly addressed many of the high truths of Revelation; that he must conceive and believe much that he cannot explain or comprehend; that moral purity clears the spiritual vision; that nothing really repugnant to a man's spirit *can* be believed by him; that practical, saving religion *is a holy life within*, and not merely a sound creed or code of laws without; and that all men have naturally a capacity to see religious truth when made really present to them.

The error is in making this to be the *whole* history of religious Truths and of Revelation. Clearly it is not so.

I. For, first, this philosophy is not so applied to the reception of any of the other kinds of truth, which yet embrace many axioms, and present many ultimate conceptions, which our spiritual reason must accept as self-evident, but which are yet *taught from without* before they are, or in most men *can* be conceived or realized within. And, then, arguments or calculations prove *truths*, or indisputable testimony proves *facts*, which we must therefore believe, though they be truths or facts quite beyond the comprehension of the mere understanding. *Other* truth comes to us in various ways from without, addressing itself to *all* the powers of our intellectual and spiritual nature; and is received by them all. Why cannot *religious* truth come as does every other kind of truth? To our spiritual intuitions, and not less, to our logical understandings? And from without, by external teaching? *Wherein* do the truths

of *religion* differ from other truths, that they alone are confined to this mode of access—*my intuitions* of the true?

II. And, why cannot God's Spirit present truths to a man's spirit, as one man's spirit presents them to another—*objectively*? He needs not our organs of communication, which though helps, and so, too, proofs of *our* infirmity, would be hindrances to higher spirits? Surely we can receive truths *externally*, and God can so offer them: and the Sacred History proves that He did so present truths at times—if that history be not a mere fiction.

And, if He could present in words, expressed and defined, any truth to any men, why could he not through such men convey His truth in like definite and permanent form? Why should *words* ever be able to express His truth accurately and effectually, and then, of necessity, cease to do so when perpetuated among men?

And, lastly, why *cannot* God—why *should* He not in religion, man's highest concern, use the art of *written* language, which He gave as He gave all good things, and by which He conveys to us much that is full of temporal profit to us?—There is, therefore, no law of our nature, no principle of sound philosophy, nor even any probable presumption against the true old theory of Inspiration. All the other way.

III. Nay, more. This whole idea of religion—as in its essence merely an *emotional principle of religious life*, entering man only by the avenue of his intuitions—is most unphilosophical as well as contrary to the else universal conception of religion.* For religion, true or false, enters man by every avenue of his nature. Be his innate capacities what they may, they are called into action, in this as in all things else, by what *comes to the man from without*.

* See McCosh's "Method of Divine Government," bk. 4, ch. ii. sec. 4 (note).

Self-evident truths, or those proven by testimony or by arguments, come to him claiming the sanction and acceptance of his Spiritual Reason. Facts and truths, with their testimony, present themselves to his understanding for his investigation and study. Commands of duty appeal to his conscience. Love and its heavenly laws stir up his affections towards God and man; and authority bends his unruly will. From the first, religion comes in all of its own fulness and variety, and demands the exercise of every endowment of man. And it comes *from without* to conjoin its external testimony from history as to its origin, miraculous proofs, and wide acceptance, with the internal testimony of our own spirits to its Divinity.

IV. For though our inborn convictions of the being of God, of the reality of right, of our own immortality and the like truths, might be said to be awakened, not produced, by what we hear or read, still how could we *know* that these ideas are not *fancies*? All of them have been pronounced such by one or other of the doctors of this philosophy. Every elemental truth of natural religion has, in its turn, been held and denied, often by the same man. And yet such a man will pronounce these successive bubbles of the moment to be solid orbs of abiding truth; and he will seem to *believe* them, too, to be such for the hour, till the restlessness of an unbelieving heart has invented some new delusion. Can the truth of God be thus unreal and changing, thus undefined and unattested?

V. Besides, *such* truths are but a small part of religion. They are not *all* of what a man needs to *believe*; and they tell us *nothing* of what we are to *do*. Facts of God's nature, and of our own nature, and of the future world, which cannot possibly lie slumbering in our intuitions, must be made known, and therefore must come from without, taught and defined and attested. So, too, must the

rules of duty; the laws which form the very basis of society and its order, of the family and its love; while every religious truth, by any possibility to be called *intuitional*, must perish from among men, unless developed and upheld by truths and commands which have no claim to the title of self-evident and necessary truths.

VI. And why *not* believe in "Inspired Logic?" to use the very phrase of one chief cavil of this false philosophy. Did not our blessed Lord Himself use "inspired logic," when He gave careful explanations of the moral law?* or offered argumentative proofs of some of His doctrines?† or showed the reasons and limits of a positive institution?‡ or confounded objections to Himself and His claims?§

And it is not only reasonable but necessary that a Revelation should involve the inspiration of the logical faculties. A great truth might be declared on God's authority manifested by external proofs. But such is the nature of the human mind that a bare proposition of a truth is not enough. The true idea can gain form and life within the mind only from illustration and argument. Would not then the Divine Spirit teach in the only way which can be effectual? the only way in which a human disciple can be indoctrinated? by explanations and proofs guarded from all error?

And are not some, at least, of the relations of deep truths to each other necessary to a correct apprehension of those truths? Cannot the Divine Spirit lead man's spirit to see these relations and reasons without violating any law of man's nature, just as well as one man may guide another

* *e. g.* Marriage, &c., St. Mark, x. 2-12; Duty to our neighbour, St. Luke, x. 25-37; Love, forgiveness, &c., St. Luke, vi. 27-38.

† *e. g.* Life and resurrection, St. Matthew, xxii. 31-32.

‡ St. Matt. xii. 1-8 and 10-13.

§ St. Matt. xxii. 41-46; St. Mark ii. 6-12.

in any demonstration in Geometry, or any argument in Philosophy? Where, then, is the absurdity in the belief that He, to whom all truths are self-evident and necessary, did not only reveal to Paul truths before unknown, but did also lead that *Inspired Philosopher* to see and explain the hidden relations and reasons of those truths, so that man's intellectual and moral nature might not be starved on the dry husks of bald propositions, but be nourished by a quickening faith unto life, by means of the truth, so proven and illustrated as to become real and nutritious food to his spirit?

VII. Moreover, we can at once see that any such philosophy, confining inspiration to man's intuitions, is utterly inconsistent with the *facts* of our Sacred History. Not only angelic messengers and audible voices making revelations to men, but every positive institution, like the Sabbath, and every sacramental or ceremonial ordinance, prove that Revelation and Inspiration go beyond the province of mere intuitions. Prophecies of the future certainly can be in no sense among necessary truths. One prophecy, then, fully proven, would overthrow this *whole* scheme of Inspiration; while this last, if true, must blot out every prophecy by denying its possibility. Still more; the prophets did not *always*,* as, surely on the true idea of Inspiration, they *need* not comprehend all of their own messages as to future events; a fact clearly inconsistent with the theory that Inspiration is only our consciousness fully awakened to the truth. And so far from moral purity, which *is*, doubtless, essential to the clearness of our *religious* intuitions, being always an essential requisite to Inspiration, we read that bad men† were used by the Spirit to utter the truth, which they loved even less than they understood

* 1 Peter i. 10, 11: and Bp. Horsley's Sermon XVIII. pp. 55, 62.

† Viz., Balaam, Saul, and Caiaphas.

it. The Bible must be rejected in spite of all its testimony, or this scheme of Inspiration fails, because utterly inconsistent with the *facts* of the History, as it is equally inconsistent with any true idea of Religion and of the laws of our whole nature.

We, therefore, receive the whole Bible as inspired of God. History, Doctrine, Precept, and Prophecy are all His, and given in His words. As He *spoke*, so did He *write*, by men. What He wrote He has preserved essentially unchanged through all ages, by the care of His Church. The Spirit, who wrote the Word, has ever dwelt in the Church, and ever dwells in each believer, to give to the Holy Scripture its true meaning in all things essential to salvation. This is the law of God's spiritual kingdom; the end of His system of spiritual teaching. And, despite all the seeming exceptions, all the perplexities of the honest, and all the cavils of the unbelieving, this law and end are even now receiving their due accomplishment, in substance and before our eyes, as regularly and effectually as are any of those laws of physical nature on which the life of man chiefly depends for its sustentation and comfort. The Holy Spirit works constantly towards this end. He preserves the Truth as a living reality, so that whosoever will, may find it ready to his hand, and take it into his heart and live by it.

Such, I believe, is the true old doctrine of Inspiration,* as, in spite of all unbelief, Christians have held it from the first, and will still cherish it to the end of time.

How holy does it make God's Word! How does it place that word on the throne of Judgment, forbidding anything else to claim a place by its side! The truth ascertained

* See Westcott's "Gospel Harmony," Appendix B., "Ante-Nicene Doct. of Insp.," pp. 126-225; and, for later testimony, that of Augustine quoted by Hooker, B. II. 4, 7.

to be primitive, and the humble, hallowed learning of our own age, help us to understand God's word; but nothing may be added or subtracted or changed. The voice that would do either is an impious voice. The man, the nation, or the church that would do either, must perish. Our Church, brethren, is not such; and *cannot* be such, just because she realizes the awfulness of this Inspiration of the written word. She has, indeed, with regard to that word, her office—and she shrinks not from it—as the authorized guide and teacher, to whose lessons we are to listen reverentially and thankfully, as she leads us to see what God's Spirit did mean when He spoke or wrote. She asserts, both in her theory in her practice, the necessity of belief in definite, objective truth, in order to salvation. But she neither claims nor desires, in this study, to enslave the intellect or the conscience; for these, to be holy, must be free; while, to be truly free, they must be gladly taught by the wisdom and guided by the authority which the kingdom of grace provides.

Thus, then, is the whole Bible, opened wide and illuminated on each page by the ever-living, ever-present Spirit, the right of each Christian man and child. It is too holy, too precious, as the Inspired Word of God, to be withheld from any one. Not that it is to be given or used as an intellectual charm to banish evil. It must be used reverently, prayerfully, and under a deep sense of responsibility for such a gift and its due improvement. Then will the Holy Spirit, by His external guidance and internal light, bring the humble reader into a daily growing knowledge of the truth; and so make his Bible, his God's Book, to be *his*, not only by way of duty and right and responsibility, but *his*, to shed the light of Heaven into his soul, its peace on his pathway, and its glorious hopes on his dying-bed.

Analogy between God's World and Word.

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IX.

ANALOGIES BETWEEN GOD'S WORLD AND WORD.

THE kind of unbelief which prevails most in Christian communities, is a *feeling* and an *impression*, rather than a settled *conviction* and *conclusion* of the mind. It *doubts* rather than *denies*. It is not so much *disbelief* as *unbelief*. It rejects Christianity, but it does not hold to any definite or positive system.

In many cases this feeling and impression are due to the diffused influence of Christianity itself. Some great moral and spiritual truth, seen to be true and thought to be unborn, by those who never, by their own reason, could have reached them, have been brought to bear against the peculiarities of the Christianity from which they had their being. Unbelief derives, unconsciously, from the Christian system, certain just and lofty views of the character of God, and then contends that they are in conflict with that system, and prove it to be false. By the diffused light of the sun, it discerns the sun itself to be behind a cloud; and then declares that instead of being a glorious orb of light, it is but a black and hideous mist.

Now, how shall this feeling and impression best be met? Shall we first show, by external evidence, that Christianity is from God? That can be done. But shall we not more surely aid the doubting mind into belief, by showing that

its vague feelings and impressions are unfounded? If it be made to see that it has been mistaken in the *character* of the alleged Revelation, it will with the more care and candour weigh the evidences which prove its truth.

There is a vague impression that Christianity cannot be believed by our common reason, and approved by our common conscience. It is supposed that the standards and tests in the human mind, *as God made it*, condemn this system. It is inferred, from language not intended to convey *that idea*, that before Christianity can be accepted as from God, our reason must be changed into a different kind of reason, that it may then believe what it now rejects.

This is a mistaken impression. Our reason, as it is, is to act, to be convinced, to be satisfied, and to approve, before it accepts, Christianity. As in the case of all other systems and subjects, we are to inquire what it is, how it agrees with what we know, and what is its origin.

The case is this. We know that our World, and ourselves, its inhabitants, are from God. He created, He sustains, He supervises, He governs this world and its inhabitants. It is those only who admit this fact with whom we argue. We have also a Bible, a revelation, an announced plan of procedure and of government, which professes to be from God. Is it from God?

I. When we look at this *known* and this *alleged* work of God, we find that they seem as if they might have come from the same hand. We do not *now* say that we find some of the same things in both, but we say that we find in both the same mind and heart, the same hand, the same character, the same kind of persons, the same ways of working. The presumption then is, that they were both the work of the same being.

We look then, at first, into these two departments of Nature and of Redemption; not to notice the identity or

similarity of what we find in them, but to see if the same methods of arrangement and of working prevail in both.

1. We find that *Nature and Christianity convey knowledge in the same way*. They both proclaim *practical facts*, without explaining the inner being, the reason, and the mode of them. Nature gives us air, but does not tell us of what it is composed, and upon which of its elements our life depends. She gives us water, but allows us to drink and be invigorated without any knowledge of its constituent elements. She gives us light, without informing us that in every ray lie latent the glories of the rainbow. In the same manner, Christianity teaches us her salutary and saving facts. Everything which a moral and immortal being needs to know for his welfare, she proclaims. Our accountability, our helplessness, our lost estate, our resurrection, our immortality, our redemption; the providence of God; the grace and salvation of the Saviour; Judgment, Heaven, and Hell; these *facts* are fully and unequivocally announced. But no pains is taken to show their harmony, or to disclose the philosophy which lies beneath them. It proclaims necessary and saving facts, as they are proclaimed by Nature. It stops where Nature stops. When, in both departments, we proceed to inquire into the inner being, the mode, the reason, and the final end of the great facts announced, we find ourselves, in both alike, surrounded on every hand by impenetrable mysteries. We can go some steps back into second causes. We may decompose some complex facts. We may see some reasons this side of the ultimate reason. But the last step, the last analysis, the last reason, the ultimate *why* and *how*, we cannot detect and comprehend. However far on the light of our single taper, or our tapers grouped, we throw our straining vision, there is beyond its reach a world of darkness. But in both it is not with that which lies in the darkness, that we are at present, and

personally, concerned. That which lies in light, which our eyes can see and our hands handle, is that by which we are to live. Surely we trace the same mind and hand in these two worlds of Nature and Redemption.

2. We find that *the laws which prevail in Nature and Christianity work in the same way, and with the same thoroughness and perfection.* There are certain laws which extend through all nature, and control alike particles of matter too minute to be discerned and masses of matter too vast to be conceived. The law of gravitation holds all worlds together, and acts alike on all masses and on every atom. The minutest particle which floats on the air is obedient to it in all its motions. All its mazy dancings to and fro are made in as precise obedience to this law as are the majestic and measured motions of the

“Planets and suns and adamantine spheres,
Wheeling unshaken through the void immense.”

So does God's moral law, as revealed in Scripture, extend to all spiritual being. It holds all spirits in its grasp, and extends to all their thoughts, feelings, and desires. At the same time it reaches to every human heart, and to every thought and intent of every human heart. All spiritual natures, and all the life and action of all spirits, are subject to its sway. And so, likewise, God's providence, which is over all worlds, is in every part of every world. We see, then, the same principle of action prevail in both these departments of Nature and of Christianity. How can we doubt that both are conceived and executed by the same wonder-working mind and hand?

3. We find also *that Nature and Christianity are alike systems of means.* In Nature an end is not reached by a mere fiat of the Almighty, but by *means*, simple or complex, slow or quick of action. God does not speak a tree

into being; but, from a little seed, slowly and by various influences of sun and shower, He develops it into full perfection. And so the kingdom of Heaven in the soul is like a grain of mustard seed: under the light of God's Spirit, and the dews of His grace, it grows gradually into completeness. Christianity is throughout, as Nature is, a system of *means*, on which results depend. In both we find the same principles, the same habits, if I may so speak, of arrangement and of procedure. How strong, then, is the presumption that they are both from the same great God!

These *specimens* of the argument may suffice to show, from the *similar modes of working* in both Nature and Christianity, that a high presumption arises, that the worker is in both the same. The object of the argument thus far is to prove, not that there is similarity or identity in *what is found* in these two departments, but that certain general principles of procedure are traced alike in both. And now, if we find that Nature and the Bible *coincide* in their teachings, upon some important subjects, we shall have an additional and vastly strengthened presumption, that the author of the one is also the author of the other.

II. It is found that there is nothing which Nature distinctly teaches man—or, perhaps, we should say, nothing which man learns from Nature—which is not taught, and that, too, with greater emphasis and clearness, in the book of God. Nay, the truths which Nature does but whisper, and which none but pure and earnest hearts can catch, are proclaimed in trumpet tones by this messenger of Heaven.

When we speak of that knowledge of God and of duty, which may be acquired by man without revelation, we use vague words. Natural religion, as it is called, has no fixed creeds and articles. Allowing to natural religion not only

what men have actually *learned* from Nature, but all that Nature actually *teaches* to the highest and purest reason, we shall find that all her teachings are confirmed by the book of God.

1. *Nature and the Bible coincide in their representations of the natural attributes of God.* Both proclaim Him, "The King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only wise God." It is claimed by the students of Nature, that such are her teachings with regard to the great Creator of all things. By some it is denied that these conclusions could have been reached without the aid of the diffused, but unrecognised light of the Bible. But if we allow that Nature teaches, and man learns from her, all these truths, how magnificently are they proclaimed in Scripture! How these truths, which are but whispered in Nature, so that many never hear them, are pealed forth, as with melodious thunders, in the word of God! Nature and Revelation are the oracular Urim and Thummim upon the breastplate of Divinity—the one "*truth*," and the other "*manifestation*"—the one containing, and the other explaining, stupendous lessons concerning the Almighty and the Infinite. What man learns from the book of Nature concerning the natural attributes of God, he can best express in the language of the Bible, and he feels that he better understands, and is more sublimely moved by them, when he utters them in the rapt anthems of Isaiah, and the lofty and swelling ascriptions of St. John.

2. If it be difficult to know how much natural religion teaches as to the *natural attributes of God*, it is still more difficult to define what she has taught in reference to the moral character of the Almighty; and in reference to the duty of man. But we may boldly say *that all that man has learned on these subjects in Nature, he will find in the Bible.* The obscure, vague words which Nature utters on

these great themes, are distinctly spoken in the Word of God. There is not a moral attribute of the Almighty, nor a moral duty falteringly put forth by Nature, which is not plainly announced in the New Testament. Natural religion declares that we know those things to be duties which are followed by good results, and add to the welfare and the happiness of man. On this ground it inculcates duty to parents, and obedience to the State. Now we fearlessly declare, that according to this rule, there is not a moral duty inculcated by Scripture, which natural religion does not sanction. "In fact," to use the language of another, "moral philosophy, and political economy, and the science of politics, the sciences which teach men the rules of well-being, whether as individuals or as communities, are, so far as they are sound, but experience and organized nature echoing back the teachings of Christianity. What principle of Christian ethics does Christianity now presume to call in question? What are the general principles of political economy, but an imperfect application to the intercourse of trading communities of those rules of good neighbourhood, and of that spirit of kindness, which Christianity inculcates? What is the larger part of political science, but a laborious and imperfect mode of realizing those results in society, which would flow spontaneously from the universal prevalence of Christian morals and of a Christian spirit? In regard to every cause that would lead to unhappiness, Christianity has stood from the first, at the *entrance* of the paths, and uttered its warning cry."* Because, then, all of human duty which Nature teaches, the Bible teaches, and all that the Bible teaches, natural religion on its own principles must acknowledge to be true, we conclude, that their teachings on these great themes *coincide*.

* Hopkins's Evidences of Christianity.

If, then we have reasoned rightly, two important truths—confirmed by a few arguments which might be expanded into a volume—are in our possession. We find that similar principles and modes of working prevail in Nature and in Providence, and that the teachings of both, in some most important particulars, *coincide*. Every reason is absent which would lead us to infer that they had different authors. Every reason is present, which would lead us to conclude that their author was the same.

III. And now we are prepared to advance a step further in the argument, and to show that what is taught by Christianity, which is additional to, above, and beyond the teachings of nature, is analogous in itself, and in its principles, to what is found in Nature. We see the same Worker carrying the same kind of work, and on the same principles, further. We see the same Governor, applying and carrying out his laws in new fields. So we *infer* from finding that all which Christianity reveals is analogous to the constitution and the course of Nature. On this point, as upon the other, we can but indicate what the argument is, and give a few specimens of the mode in which it may be conducted.

The distinctive principles of the Bible are consonant with the dictates of enlightened reason; are such as God adopts in Nature and in Providence; such as man habitually recognises as just, wise, and good.

1. *The doctrine of a future state is prominent in the Bible.* Why should it seem incredible that the body, dissolved in dust, should again be joined by the soul in a higher and nobler state of being? Nature is full of kindred processes and changes. The little seed cast into the ground, moulders; and lo! in a few years, the strong oak, born from it, throws out its giant arms, and wrestles with the whirlwind. An unsightly little worm dries up and dies to-day; and to-morrow, out of it, the bright-winged butterfly comes and

soars. How improbable, at the first view, would such a change appear! It is, for anything we know, quite as wonderful as the death and resurrection of the body. In the present life, the difference between a human being at one period and another, may be as great as that between his life on earth and his resurrection-life. How different is the infant from the man! How vastly different the unborn child and the same being ripe in years and in culture! We are the unborn children of immortality in the womb of time. Who shall say, with such changes in this world before his eyes, that a future state of a more advanced life, is either impossible or improbable? If it is proclaimed by Revelation, then in order to receive it, we need accept no new principle, but one which Nature and Providence have always and uniformly proclaimed.

2. *That this future state is one of rewards and punishments, is also a peculiar doctrine of the Bible.* It is one which commends itself to our inborn sense of justice, and harmonizes with God's actual dealings in the present world. Notwithstanding the moral disorders of the world, the often apparent or real prosperity of the wicked, and the sufferings of the innocent, men do trace, even here, a righteous moral government. After the transient happiness of the vile and wicked, we often see justice overtake them. We see, also, as a general law, that the virtuous prosper and the wicked are punished. Shall not the principle then which prevails here, and which our moral judgment sanctions, prevail also beyond the tomb? If the vicious die before retribution meets them here, shall we not expect that it will seize them hereafter? If the virtuous die in the midst of suffering and by injustice, shall not their rewards greet and bless them in the other world? If the completion of this recognised scheme of rewards and punishments is arrested on earth, shall it not be

realized in another state of being? Surely this is what we should be led to expect! And how should the human heart leap with joy to *know*, what Nature could only teach us to *surmise* and to *desire*! How comforting is the reflection, in a world where injustice so often rides dominant and insulting over prostrate innocence, that in another world every inequality shall be removed! The temple of justice shall rise in complete beauty and proportion on the plains of heaven. Here we see its unfinished materials thrown together in a seemingly unmeaning and unmanageable confusion. Some of its turret-tops lie pressed under its intended foundation-stones; and the fine carvings of the architrave lie beneath the columns they were fashioned to surmount. Yet may a studious and instructed eye discern its general plan, and in the finish and beauty of some of its parts, scattered amid shapeless masses, we may form some idea of its grandeur and glory when it shall be complete. All these materials, however rude and heterogeneous some of them may appear, shall be made to minister to the strength, harmony, and grace of the majestic edifice; and on its front HOLINESS shall be inscribed; and under its dome the redeemed children of God shall for ever sing, "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints!"

But these two doctrines of a future state of rewards and punishments have been *surmised* at times by reason. Other still more distinctive and exclusive doctrines, which natural religion never reached, remain.

3. It is a peculiar and distinctive doctrine of the Bible, that a solitary evil act—an act of disobedience to God on the part of our first parents—was the beginning of a long train of wretchedness which has come upon the world. That such sad and long-continued consequences should flow from a single act, we shall see to be in harmony with our constant experience, and necessary to the well-being and

existence of society. The consequences of guilt, on the part of a parent, pass over and rest upon his children. The intemperate man not only ruins himself, but frequently blights the health and happiness and prospects of his children. By a single act of treason, many titled persons, in other countries, have stripped themselves, and their children through all generations, of their privileges and honours. The monarch who a few years since sat on the throne of France, by a single act deprived not only himself, but his heir, and, it may be, his descendants through all time, of whatever glory there is in regal state. By a single stroke of his pen, made in a moment, the forger or defaulter brings upon himself bitter consequences for all his life, and, it may be, upon all his family, all their lives long. No one vindicates the robber, the murderer, or any other culprit, on the ground that he committed his crime quickly, in an instant. We look to his evil intent, and to the consequences of his crime; and the murderer by slow poison, and the dealer of death by a single blow, have the same punishment. Such punishment is necessary for the preservation of society and of moral government. Now it may be, that the evil consequences which flowed from the disobedience of Adam are not greater, when viewed in reference to the vastness of God's government, the eternity of His duration, than are the consequences which flow from an act of guilt against human society, viewed in reference to its duration and extent. If it be just that such consequences should follow crime against human government, it is just that a proportioned retribution should follow disloyalty to the government of God. If a life-long penalty is not too great for human justice, a life-long penalty is not too great for Divine justice, though that lifetime be eternity. By such awful and far-reaching consequences all God's intelligent creatures would be warned, with a solemnity

which would be likely to insure their everlasting loyalty, that God's laws must be maintained inviolate!

4. Another distinctive doctrine of the Gospel is Redemption. By Adam's fall, all mankind having become depraved, restoration and salvation have been effected by the agency of a *Mediator*. And this is in harmony with our constant experience. Our chief blessings come to us from God through provided *media*. In every period of our being it is so. It was through the pains, cares, and watchings of a tender mother that our infancy was guarded. If it be God's appointment that we are ushered into this world and prepared for its duties and enjoyments through the sufferings and love of another, it is in harmony with this arrangement that we should be prepared for another world by the pains and love of a Redeemer. Knowledge comes through others. Food reaches us through others. All God's best gifts come to us through some mediate agency. And if it be said that the doctrine of Redemption by Jesus Christ has this peculiarity of *atonement* and *substitution*, still, it may be shown, that every instance of substituted sufferings, on the part of a friend, parent, or public benefactor, is in accordance with this feature of the Divine arrangement. Should the cloud of war frown on our coasts and darken our valleys, and our homes be filled with fear and gloom, then, through you, patriot citizens, who would rush to the rescue—by the pouring out of your blood—a saved and grateful people would smile again in peace and safety! By mediation, by atonement, by substitution, God acts in the kingdom of Grace, as he does in the kingdom of Nature.

5. To other doctrines, still more remote from man's unaided discovery, the same remarks might be applied. That arrangement by which some nations are called to the knowledge of Revelation and some are not, some individuals

saved and some lost; the doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit, and other peculiar truths, which go beyond natural religion, are yet on the same line with it, and, when revealed, can be seen by reason to be in analogy with Nature, though they could never, by reason, have been discovered.

We find, then, that in these two departments, of Nature and of Christianity, the same principles of procedure prevail; that many of their teachings coincide; that Christianity, when it goes beyond Nature, proceeds in the same line, and conforms to her's its arrangements. Its hard words are made up of Nature's easy syllables. Its great conclusions result from nature's simple and admitted premises. In view of these resemblances, the probability that they are the work of the same great heart and mind and hand rises almost to demonstration.

IV. But there is still another step to this argument which leads the candid mind into a conviction that Christianity is from God: a conviction so strong that it scarcely feels the need of external evidence. God's Word throws vast light on God's World. It clears up many obscurities. It explains many difficulties. It enables natural religion to reach and rest in her conclusions, with the more assured conviction, because it removes objections which she *admitted* and could not *obviate*. By placing the case more fully before natural religion, disclosing the wider connexions and the remoter reasons of many facts, it shows her how she can receive, with assured certainty, what she before held with faltering faith. It shows her that though some of the main conclusions which she has reached are just and true, yet with only the knowledge, and on the principles, in her possession, she must hold them in connexion with such powerful difficulties and objections, as almost shake them from her grasp.

1. Natural religion proclaims, as an article of her faith, that God is a just and righteous Governor. Noticing how evil and suffering follow the violation of natural and moral laws, how retribution dogs the footsteps of the transgressor, she discerns, amid all the confusions of the world, a righteous moral administration, and concludes, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth." But observe how often this conviction must shake in the mind of the Natural Religionist, when it has no other reasons to keep it firm than those which Nature furnishes. He discerns righteousness to be God's rule. But whenever—and how often, in this evil world, does this occur!—he observes the innocent ultimately perish, and the vicious ultimately triumph; he sees an inexplicable *exception* to the rule! What shall he do with the exception? Perfect Justice, Divine Justice, should have no exceptions. It should be uniform, universal, irresistible in its operation. A Justice which sometimes slumbers, though it more often wakes, is imperfect Justice. Omitted Justice is inflicted wrong. What shall he do with the exceptions? If he adopts belief in future rewards and punishments—as some theories of natural religion do—then many of his difficulties vanish. He sees then that suffering innocence is finally vindicated and rewarded, and prosperous wrong cast down beneath burning retributions. But still a great difficulty remains. Why should innocence, though ultimately vindicated and rewarded, suffer at all? -How is it to be reconciled to God's Justice that they who have done no sin should suffer much evil? On this difficulty reason throws no ray of light! It is compelled to build up and keep up the conviction of God's perfect Justice, with this flaw, this gap in the foundations. What wonder that when struck by the storms of passion, temptation, and despair, it falls, and crushes all

belief, and leaves the soul broken and bleeding under its ruins?

But observe here how God's Word affords the light by which alone God's World can be read and comprehended. It furnishes new facts which explain old facts, which are otherwise inexplicable. It distinctly *announces* the retribution which reason vaguely *guesses*. In the life and immortality which it brings to light, it affords a field on which all inequalities shall be adjusted. It reveals a history which throws much light on the mystery of suffering. It tells the story of the fall. It proves that man was not created with the poor prone nature under which he now stoops and staggers, but that he inherits it, by a law which runs through all God's works, from his fallen first father. It shows that there are no strictly innocent human beings. It proves that all men, having sinned, deserve, if not the particular evil which they suffer, yet an equal evil, as the just meed of their transgressions. It displays the sweet uses of adversity. It exhibits God's love in the discipline of pain. It displays the All-wise "from seeming evil still educating good." It shows that only infants are perfectly innocent, and that they suffer under a general uniform law, which God cannot abrogate, and that their sufferings, *as such*, are temporary, and are followed by joys that make them seem less than nothing. How great, without these explanations, are the difficulties of natural religion! How are they diminished by Christianity! How slight are those which remain! How rapidly are they dissolving in the light over which they float! How like the little shreds of cloud over the pearly sky of dawn, do they catch radiance from the orb which is still below time's horizon, and in whose rising light they shall disappear! Surely if Christianity so often coincides with Nature, is always in analogy

with Nature, and explains Nature, it must be from the hand of Nature's God !

2. Natural Religion proclaims the *goodness* of the Almighty. Benevolence is seen to be the design and rule ; suffering and evil the contravention of the design, and the exception to, the rule. We grant that the Natural Religionist, by the exercise of right reason, can justly reach and rest in this conclusion. But on his principles and with his knowledge, upon this supposition of God's perfect benevolence, the existence of sin and suffering *at all*, must be inexplicable and confounding. Why *any* exception to the rule ? Why *any* contravention of the design ? From his position he must be led to inquire, whether God was not unable to make a perfect world ; or whether His nature is not capricious and imperfect, so that while He does good as a rule, He sometimes yields to impulse or neglect, and lets in evil ; or whether there may not be two Gods—the evil and the good ? He may see how, in many cases, evil is overruled for good ; but while this proves God's goodness in His dealings with it *after it has come* into the world, it does not destroy its nature as evil, and does not explain how God's goodness is reconcileable with its coming. Here, as in the case of God's Justice, and by the same history, and the same reasons, Christianity clears up the difficulties of Natural Religion. It shows how God *did* make a perfect world ; how man, in the perverse exercise of that free will, which was the perfection and glory of his nature, and necessary to a perfect world, introduced into the peaceful and happy work of perfect benevolence, sin, suffering, disorder, death. It shows God springing forward to meet and counterwork and educe from the evil—which He made every provision, consistent with His perfections, to exclude from the universe—all the good and all the happiness to His creatures, which infinite wis-

dom, love and power, could compass. Surely a system which explains the difficulties and supplies the deficiencies of Nature, must be from the God of Nature.

3. But the disorder of the material world, and the sufferings of God's innocent animate creation, are a still greater difficulty in view of the perfect power, wisdom, benevolence, and justice of the Almighty, than is the existence of moral evil and its attendant pains. *That* might possibly be accounted for by reason, on the ground of man's freedom. But that this material world should be in such disorder, and that creatures incapable of sin should suffer—how can reason give any solution to this dark enigma? It is Christianity alone that can shed upon this subject a ray of light. Christianity shows us *how*, if it does not show us *why*, it occurred. Nay, it shows us *why*, after man in the exercise of his perverse free will had fallen, the world which he inhabited, became also a fallen world, that it might be his fit abode. Matter was created in subordination to the spiritual world, and adjusted to its nature and its wants. When man was perfect, his world was perfect. But it follows the fortunes, and reflects the features of man, for whom it was created. It “was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who subjected it” to become a sharer of his woe. It fell with him. Its disorder reflected his disorder. Its suffering corresponded to his suffering. We see then the *how*, and the immediate and necessary, if not remote and ultimate *why* of this strange, and to reason, utterly *inexplicable* mystery. Nature, whose voices must be so discordant to the ear of reason, utters a confirming and consenting testimony to the ear of the believer in the Word of God. In the sunshine and the dew, in the beauty and bounty of the earth, in the happy life of its myriad creatures, the Natural Religionist reads God's goodness, and is charmed and grateful. But when

he looks at wild wastes and raging seas, at the charged cloud and the sweeping tempest, at the volcano and the earthquake; when he sees the sufferings, and hears the cry of God's helpless creatures, pursued by beasts of prey, or dying under the knife of man, then he is met by what seems a terrifying and confounding contradiction. But to the believer in Revelation, Earth is a solemn Teacher who does but repeat to him the great lessons of the Bible. It is a vast symbol of the world of souls, to which it is conformed, and by which it is inhabited. The strife and gloom and elemental war and woe, which appear in the midst of beauty, harmony, and joy in Nature, do but correspond to the suffering, sin, and struggle in the mind of man, which are seen to blend and alternate with its beautiful affections, and its blameless joys. From every soft vale of beauty, and from every mountain-throne of power, and from every wild scene of elemental war, earth teaches us that our souls groan in a state of probation and of struggle; that our joys ever nestle beneath toppling avalanches of woe; that our good always dwells on a precipice, beneath which the inexhaustible and undermining spring of innate evil flows; that ours is not a perfect and happy moral world, and that to become such it must undergo a new creation.

Now, in view of these reasonings, if it appear that in this known World of God, and this alleged Word of God, we find the same methods and principles of proceeding; if many of their teachings coincide; if where the Word *adds* to the teachings of the World, it teaches truths that are analogous to hers; and if the Word throw floods of light upon the dark places of the World, making its truths plainer, dissipating its obscurities, and explaining its difficulties, how can the conclusion be avoided that this Word must be from God? How can we do otherwise than expect to find the evidences for its truth satisfying and

conclusive? The antecedent probability, the high presumption, from the *character* merely of this Word of God, without reference to the presumption which rises from its history, is that it must be of God.

1. Hence the power which Christianity possesses over the convictions of mankind. Rightly and fully presented, it vindicates by exhibiting its Divinity, even as the sun proves its light, by shining. Itself is its evidence. As Nature speaks of the God from whom it came, by the marks of God's work upon it, so does Christianity speak of God, its Author, to the minds that receive and the hearts that feel its truths. Let us not then doubt that in exhibiting Christianity in all its Divine fulness, we are exhibiting its evidences. Let *it* be preached, and some of its best proofs will not be wanting.

2. Hence let not the humble believer who has received Christianity with an earnest faith, with an undoubting confidence, be shaken in that faith, because he has not studied and weighed its external evidences, and been convinced by them of its truth. Let him not be persuaded that his faith rests on no sure and reasonable foundations; and is but blind credulity. The Bible has addressed to him the same arguments as Nature has, to prove to him that it is from God. God is seen in the Bible in more magnificent, moving, touching demonstrations than in the world. It was not by syllogisms, by histories, by proofs outside of itself, that Nature was seen to be from God. It was Nature's self that spoke to him of God. In the same manner has the Bible spoken. He need not be ashamed of his conviction, nor give it up, if he never have the power nor the opportunity to examine those external evidences which so abundantly prove its truth.

3. Hence, too, the Christian must not allow himself to think or speak as if it were Christianity that was chiefly

encumbered by inexplicable difficulties, and as if they did not attach to Natural Religion. The difficulties of Natural Religion are the great and confounding difficulties. Reason, unaided by Revelation, has, in every system of Religion which she can construct, real *difficulties*, as distinguished from the *mysteries* and *obscurities* which are found in Christianity. They are places in which we can *see* that there are inconsistencies, irreconcilablenesses, things which the reason cannot harmonize. But the difficulties of Christianity are places in which *we cannot see at all*; they are not in conflict with reason, but beyond reason. In the one system things which are in conflict lie in the light before us. We see their incongruity. In the other system certain things lie in the darkness which is beyond us, which we cannot see at all, but which we have good evidence shall, when the light of the eternal day shall be let in upon them, ravish us with their beauty and their inter-harmony, their sweet accord with all the systems of all God's worlds, and with all the principles of a perfect, holy, and benevolent administration. In the one system we stand in a temple which is unfinished; whose plan we cannot trace; whose unbuttressed walls we fear will fall; whose incongruous construction offends our eye, and excites our apprehensions of its stability; but the whole of which we can see. In the other system our joyful worship is rendered and our peaceful rest enjoyed, in a grand, ordered, and completed temple, whose harmony charms our minds, and whose stability assures our hearts; though beneath it, under its vaulted foundations, there are dark places, into which if we enter we cannot see; but in which, if we could see, we should discern only majesty, stability, proportion, power! There are shadows in the angles and niches, and under the crypts of the great Temple of Truth; but it

stands in light, and the light streams within and cheers its happy worshippers.

And now, my friend, fellow-traveller through time to eternity, what is your position in reference to these great truths? Have you, because of the difficulties of Christianity, turned away from it? Do you reject the Bible as from God? If we have reasoned well, the difficulties of reason are far greater without than with the Bible. And then think of your position—how lonely, how cheerless, how wrapped around with inexorable mysteries! There are, indeed, curtains of mystery before the Christian's eye; but he sees angel hands putting them aside, and light from Heaven gleaming through! But you are here on this isolated, darkened world, knowing only that there is a God, and that He made you, sustains you, and governs you. That He is perfectly good and holy you strive to feel, though you are often made to doubt. What He is, you cannot fully know; you can but surmise and hope. But the wonder of wonders is, that He never speaks to you, that He leaves you to yourself in this dark world, that He never addresses a single word of teaching or encouragement to the poor weak creature whom He has made and cast out on a perilous world, to battle alone with sin, and, at last, to yield to the embrace of the grim and inevitable death. When, to the dumb surrounding space, or to the speechless stars, you send forth a cry of passionate inquiry, "Whence and why and what am I, and whither destined? What is the power that made and keeps me? What are His character, designs, and will?"—there comes no reply. In vain do you speak to your own wondering soul. In vain do you speak to the dumb darkness. From the one you hear only questions, and from the other comes no reply. I should think this sense of loneliness and desertion would be unspeakably gloomy and oppressive to your soul.

When, in its timidity, or terror, or anxious longing, it desired to know what it should do, whether God loved it, whether He would make it happy hereafter, and could get no answer, oh! I should think God's refusal to speak, His inexorable silence, would seem cruel, cruel! And then, when you sometimes think that the Bible may be true, and unbelief in Christ a sin, and that an eternity of woe may follow a lifetime of sin and sorrow, I should think your heart would break with the anguish of its doubts and fears.

My brother, we, the children of God, and you, are in the same low vale of mortal life; but your eye and step are away from the light, in the direction where that vale descends into deeper glooms, until it ends, by a single step, in the black pool of death; but we are travelling in the opposite direction, upwards and towards the light. The mountains that enclose us are tipped and radiant with light and glory from the eternal world. Beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring good tidings of the land beyond them; that publish peace; that say unto us that our God reigneth! Turn and go with us, and we will do you good, and you shall find peace to your souls.

On the Relation of the Objective and Subjective
Factors in Revelation.

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X.

ON THE

RELATION OF THE OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE FACTORS IN REVELATION.

BEFORE an audience like the present—here in the house of God, where we congregate to feed the soul with the pure word of truth, the teachings and comforts of the Gospel—limited, as I necessarily am, to a brief space of time, I deem it best to drop, as much as possible, the technicalities of language, which might convey to the minds of many but obscure ideas, or encumber the subject with lengthy explanations. It will be best to fasten our attention upon the substance rather than the form, and single out some of the main and most salient points it presents to our consideration. May the Spirit of wisdom and understanding guide me in the performance of my duty! and may you, my hearers, aid my humble effort by kindly lending a patient and attentive ear to the discussion of a subject which I hope will, before I have concluded, be fixed in your minds as one of vast and paramount importance.

From whatever point of view we look upon man, as he is presented to us in actual life, he never appears as an isolated being. The individual is not only a link in the indefinite chain which stretches from the lowest dust to

the most highly endowed creature verging on perfection ; he is also the centre of a circle or many circles, which unite upon him their converging rays. Whether we take him in his material, his intellectual, or his moral and social existence, he stands in the midst of a surrounding reality, which, as it is the field where his nature and individuality develop themselves, is also a constant source of moulding influences, sets bounds to the freedom of his movements, and gives laws to his existence. Our whole life is to some extent a play and counterplay of these elements ; a conflict, more or less hostile, between the Self of the individual and the opposing power and reality of beings and laws that encircle him ; an antagonism, more or less embittered, between the forces proceeding from the individual as the centre, upon the periphery that is described around him by an almighty decree, and the forces which from that periphery press upon the centre.

It is to this law of his existence that he owes his development. The influences of the surrounding world of matter and mind are the means to call forth into action every latent faculty. They open the avenues which lead the human mind to knowledge and power. In the sweat of his brow he earned his bread, and in the struggle for his existence he learned to engage in the re-conquest of the dominion of the earth. These laws and his necessities forced him to shelter himself in houses, to watch the seasons, to sow and reap the fruits of the ground ; they taught him to tame the elements and make them his vassals, to turn the devouring flame into his most useful servant, and extract life and health from poisonous herbs and metals ; they taught him to decipher the laws of the universe in the stars which, with their friendly light, courted his gaze ; they roused his energy and ingenuity to bid the ocean open a pathway for his fleet, to rob the thunder of his bolt, and

annihilate distance. They elicited his mental powers and wooed him from mere animal and material existence into the higher sphere of intellectual life, awakened in him the thirst for knowledge and sent him in pursuit of wisdom, to search the mind of the Creator, and think over the thoughts of the Deity, as they stand revealed to him incorporated in His works. They made him seek the company of his fellows, and bound his life in the softening and ennobling ties of human society, and developed those moral attributes which wreath his brow with the civic crown, nobler than an imperial diadem—which bear witness of his heaven-descended origin—traces of the image of God in which he was created.

But along with the triumphant shout, which well may ascend in honour of the high achievements and glorious conquests of his race, is heard the note of wailing and distress, the tearful cry of misery, the ravings of despair. For man does not only, nor chiefly, move in harmony with the conditions that are laid down for him by his Maker in the surrounding reality; but, however obscure the fact may appear to many in its origin, the natural result of the untutored exercises of the individual (whether in the material, intellectual, or moral aspect) leads to a contest between the two forces; and hence the conflicts and the sufferings of this life! The great problem of life is an even balance, the necessary equilibrium between the two elements, between what we may term its *objective* and *subjective factors*; the great cause of the evils which fall to the lot of man is, the disturbance of this equilibrium, the disproportion between the respective power and claims of the two factors.

'Tis true, in his inferior life, man generally walks quietly in the leading strings of the laws of nature and nature's God; the violation of the conditions of his material wel-

fare brings with it a punishment too immediate and too severe to allow him long to kick against the pricks, and when he violates them to his hurt, he does so from moral perversion; witness gluttony and drunkenness! But in his intellectual and moral life man moves more freely; the reality that still binds him in laws is less plain to his perception—if we may say so—less tangible and visible; and he sins with less restraint, just because he moves in a higher sphere; a being gifted with intelligence; a moral agent! But is he therefore really more free from either their controlling or avenging power? They are immutable, of a duration commensurate with the existence of this world, of power irresistible; they are the laws of God. Ah! if we could have the dying confessions of all ages, we would learn, that of all the agonies which haunt the soul of man on earth, the sorest are those which the neglect and contempt of those laws entail upon him, which encircle his intellectual and moral sphere, which condition the growth and happiness of his intelligent and moral nature.

We admit all the charges which the reformers of our days bring up against the existing order of things; we admit and feel all its anomalies, and to a more fearful extent. We know that our lauded civilization is fraught with curses as with blessings; that as it is the glory of man, so it is his sin and his shame; that its gigantic progress rests not on the basis of true happiness; that the fearful momentum it has acquired threatens to sweep away the remaining barriers of all that we hold sacred and right; that its consolidating and concentrative tendencies perpetuate and increase the wrongs of social inequality; we foresee how also, in this country of many privileges and blessings, as soon as its vast area shall be crowded with an equally dense population, will be transacted the tragedy of Dives and Lazarus, which makes the heart of Europe bleed,

and before our anxious eye looms up the dreaded spectacle of war—war to the knife—between the rich and the poor, the Princes and the Pariahs of the earth. But we refuse both their aims and their remedies. The statesman acts but negatively, and at best prolongs the “status quo” by an armed truce between the jarring elements of society. Political economy applies but palliatives to evils which should be cured in their source; and Socialism, in its attempts at positive reforms, only deepens the discord which exists between the contending elements. It is based on the exaltation of self; it sanctions the passions of the individual; the happiness it promises is selfish, sensual; it is impossible, because heightening the disproportion between the mutual demands of the individual and the eternal laws of his existence.

The reason of these failures and the insufficiency of the attempted cure is, that the evil lies *within, in the subjective*, and not in the objective factors of the human life! And, let it be; let us assume, that happiness can be secured by a one-sided triumph. What is the result aimed at? Would it be a happiness to satisfy the aspirations of an immortal soul, of a spirit whose longings are upwards, and whose capacities are not exhausted in the search of what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? Of all the attempts to degrade man in the scale of intelligent existences—the Socialist and the Communist systems of the day—the utilitarian tendencies of the age are among the worst! This life would indeed be worthless, if it gave us but the moment, and robbed us of the future; if it was bounded by earth and time, to the exclusion of heaven and eternity; if its threescore years and ten of toiling and sweating had no other aim than a membership in a life-and-comfort insurance company!

There *is* a remedy for all the ills and difficulties of this

life, a solution for all the doubts and yearnings of the soul—but it is only found in the establishment of perfect harmony between the subjective and objective elements of our existence; between the world within and the world without! And this harmony *is* attainable, and blessed with the development and perfecting of all that is truly great and heavenly in the human mind, laden with the realization of every high hope, every immortal aspiration of the human heart—but only when, leaving the lower circles of our existence, we enlarge our horizon, and look beyond the laws that hem us in, up to Him who made both us and them; when asking for wisdom beyond that of this world, from the Father of lights, the Fountain of all wisdom, we learn to adore “the depths both of the wisdom and knowledge of God;” when we exchange the poverty of sight for the inexhaustible riches of faith; when, looking upon the society of earth as only preparatory, we rise to the appreciation of Heaven as our home, and seek the fellowship of the saints in light. Only then do we take the proper standpoint, from which to survey the phenomena of life, and understand their meaning and relative position; only then can we find our guide through its labyrinths, the law to regulate our course, and discover harmony in the apparent contradictions of this life. *Religion*—and religion alone—extends our vision beyond the shadows of earth and time; Religion, and religion only, raises us at once into the presence of the great Author of our existence, and teaches us the proper position of the individual amidst the multitudes of beings, to which he gave life, and whom He bound together in the laws of eternal harmony. Religion, only, discloses to us the great cause of all the woes which our race is heir to—the great sin of man—his apostacy from God, his forgetfulness of Him who made us, and of His will; obedience to which is the immutable condition of

creature-happiness! Religion alone points out its all-sufficient remedy.

Put God out of all the thoughts of the creature, and *self* becomes his centre of gravitation; his whole existence becomes disordered, and the towering ambition of the individual, vainly struggling against the law of God, recoils upon himself in the endurance of the penal evils of this life. Put back the thought of God, and the fear and love of His holy name, into the heart of man, and he is poised securely in the strong arm and the everlasting love of his Maker. 'Tis true, there is his sin, which, like a yawning gulf, separates him from the favour of God, and exiles him from His presence! But when he sees a better than the Roman Curtius—One radiant with divinity, yet clad in the rags of humanity—leap into the fearful abyss; when he hears the voice of the Father call to him, "Return;" when a Saviour invites him to come, come and be saved, and find rest for his weary, heavy-laden soul; when the mystery of love is revealed to him, that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" when the counsel of grace makes known how He was made "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him;" then the poor sinner learns that the chasm is closed; reconciliation has taken place, harmony is restored, and that there is now for him a free access into the presence and the favour of God; that "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other!"

Thus we have reached the true position which the individual occupies, and the point from which the riddle of life must be solved. It is not so much in the relation he sustains to the laws of matter, mind, and human society, that the question of his existence is answered, his way

pointed out, and his steps directed, but *in the relation he sustains to his Maker!* This relation determines all others: however much he strive to master them, he fails when he fails in his relation to God! If God be for him, who can be against him? but, if God be against him, what would it profit him were he to gain the whole world? This subject has indeed agitated mankind at all times and everywhere. But we cannot pause now to prove that, though many may have sought and be seeking the Lord, "if haply they might feel after Him and find Him," yet there is but *one* way; and when we speak of Religion as the answer to all doubts, the panacea for all ills, the balm for every wound—we mean no other than *Christianity!*

But what a subject is laid open before our mind, if from the Christian point of view we consider the subjective and objective relations of human life, the position of the individual as conditioned by the reality of the Divine will in all the laws and phenomena that surround him! Oh, for time and ability to unrol the book of oracular responses, which, upon a just appreciation of this relation, from a perfect understanding of this subject, and *this* only, can be given to all the questions which the doubting, the fearful, or the hopeful, the joyous or the suffering heart of man can ask! There is no question of humanity, no speculation in philosophy, no problem of society, but they find their solution here! There is no problem in Christianity, but it illustrates and is illustrated by this relation. All the questions which ever agitated the Christian Church, all the disputes in theology, all the truths of practical religion, are measured by the standard of this relation! No doctrine, no practice, no moral precept, no rite or sacrament, no church authority, no external form of government or worship, no internal act of adoration and obedience, of faith or repentance; but they receive their valuation,

their comparative importance from this stand-point: *the relative position, the mutual agency of God and man as the objective and subjective factors of our existence.* Before this tribunal, the great question of the sovereignty of grace and the freedom of the moral agent is to be argued; here the claims reconciled between faith and works; here the laws of proportion laid down between the visible and invisible church, the external kingdom of Christ in the world—and the kingdom of God “which cometh not with observation, but is within.”

All these questions rest upon the *fact of a Divine Revelation.* The fundamental question, underlying all further speculations on this great subject, refers to the mutual position of the two elements in this, in Revelation; and to a few remarks on this relation, let us devote the remaining portion of our time.

We will consider, first, the nature of the Revelation as given to man, and then the relation sustained towards it, both actively and passively, by man, the individual, as the subjective factor.

I. To speak of the Revelation itself. The premise upon which we proceed is, that it is *objective*, that is, external, bestowed upon man from without, and cannot originate within his own mind. This is the assumption upon which we now proceed. We cannot delay to prove the fact of such a Divine Revelation, and thus of an objective or external communication from God to man; however instructive and satisfactory the task might be, to show the absurdity and unphilosophical character of a denial of its possibility, however triumphantly we could establish it by analogy, this is not the question before us; it is not the subject of our present discussion; we leave it to others: suffice it to say, that unless the discords and enormities of this life should be our normal condition—an external reve-

lation is, humanly speaking, *necessary*. The conflict between the individual and the surrounding externality cannot be reduced to harmony by the subjective suggestions, the one-sided fiat of the individual. They would only increase the weight of self and deepen the disproportion. If harmony is to be restored, it cannot be but by the subjection of self upon the authoritative interposition of the Creator; and just as our material, intelligent, and moral nature has its external medium—its surrounding bounds, and objectively revealed laws; just so and still more must we infer is the spiritual nature of man placed face to face with a spiritual revelation of that God, who, after all, stands behind every existence, and both made the individual and appointed him his sphere of action. “The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” “There is a spirit in man,” saith the Scripture, “but the inspiration of the Almighty giveth men understanding.”

Now the objective element of Revelation must be: 1. *Definite* and *distinct*; to use its own words, it is “sure, giving light to the simple;” otherwise it would be no safeguard against the vagaries of spiritual insight and the pretensions of fanaticism. “Divine Revelation” would be the watchword of every impostor, the great weapon of selfishness to tread down every right and law of God and man, were it not a record closed and complete, from which nothing can be taken away, and to which nothing can be added. The “Spirit,” indeed, is abroad, sent from the Father and the Son to open the eyes of man,—but, to behold the beauty of the law here revealed; to open the stubborn heart, but to yield to the pleadings of this revelation; to guide us into all truth, but truth as contained here; He takes of the things of Christ, and brings all things to our remembrance and understanding, that are here laid down; and we must

try the spirits that speak to us out of this very volume; out of "the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in them."

2. Again, this Revelation must be *unchangeable*, like its Author and His eternal decrees towards man. All human knowledge is but relative, and requires some fixed standard by which it must measure itself; and here, in the Revelation sent from God, it is fixed immutably! Though, for his own wise and gracious purposes, the Creator may suspend the laws of the material creation and miraculously interpose creative power, where, ordinarily, to the perception of man, His sustaining laws prevail; in the Revelation which contains the expression of His will, the delineation of that holiness which is His glory, and which He demands the rational creature to follow after; the promises with which He woos us to obedience, the threatenings by which He would deter us from evil; in the revelation of His own moral attributes and of the demands He makes on His moral creatures—there can be no variableness, neither shadow of turning; heaven and earth may pass away, but not a jot or tittle of His law, till all be fulfilled; father and mother may forsake us, and every man become a liar, but God is true, and all His promises are aye and amen!

3. And since this Revelation would be without purpose, did it not meet with its field of operation in the life, the mind, and will of man, it is plain, that it must be *placed within his reach*; and if God has indeed given such a Revelation—such a declaration of His holy will, and of His gracious counsel, which is to be "a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path," a guide to holiness and heaven, a lighthouse in the dark days of our pilgrimage, and tempest-tossed voyage below—then it must be evident, that He who thought fit to give it, would also secure its propagation and continuance among those to whom it is vouchsafed; that

though all other records might be lost or corrupted, this should be wonderfully preserved; that though all other knowledge might not only be obscured, but even extinguished, this should be kept alive even amidst the darkest ages and the days of overwhelming ignorance; that, sent by the Supreme Ruler, the Almighty Governor of the world, it would not fail in its end; that, if its object is declared to be the founding and building of an holy Church, the saving of sinners justified in Christ—if along with this declared intention goes the promise of His continued presence, even to the end of the world—then we could trust, that though we do not claim infallibility for anything but this Revelation itself, and not for any particular society that hopes to be founded upon it, yet the *indefectibility of the Christian Church*, which is the object of this gracious Revelation, is thereby guarantied, that the true Church shall not fail; that though the mass of mankind in all ages may pass by heedlessly the claims of God and of his Church, yet in all ages there has been a band of faithful followers of Christ that should be saved, witnesses to His truth and power; there is at all times the certainty to cheer the humble seeker after truth, that he is accompanied in his heavenward career by others, who like him seek Christ the Beloved, aided by their prayers, watched over by the ministering spirits of God, rejoicing over penitent sinners; that he may ever trust to find those with whom to worship God in spirit and in truth, and in whose company, and by whose example and conversation, he may increase in grace and knowledge and every spiritual gift.

4. The last, but a most practically important feature in the objective revelation, given by the Ruler of the Universe to the children of men for their guidance and salvation, is its *supreme authority*, its claims to immediate and universal obedience on the part of those to whom it is sent!

If its claims are disregarded, truly the great God will not force free agents into an unwilling obedience, which would be none at all. But they disobey at their own risk, the Divine displeasure must be visited upon them. And oh! if the violations of nature's laws bring suffering and agony in their train, "What shall be the end of those who believe not the Gospel?" Yes, "if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Revelation is not silent, but only when you leave this beautiful earth behind, and bid farewell to its "happy sun and healthy breezes," when you depart from all that bears the traces of God's love and goodness, and go and ask at the gates of Gehenna, can you fathom the import and despair of an irremediable, everlasting, hopeless controversy with God! In this, its supreme authority, Revelation presses itself most closely upon man, and imposes on each individual the necessity of knowing and holding the truth in *its objective reality and positive character*.

If I had not detained you already so long that I must economize every moment that is left me, I could enlarge on this point, and prove, from the history of man and the events of God's Church, from the beginning down to this day, how important it is to adhere to the positive features of Revelation. I could show how the development of the subjective element of individual freedom, to the neglect of these positive objective features, always proved destructive to the power of the Church and the vitality of religion; how, for instance, the strength of the Western Church, and its all but exclusive importance as compared with the Eastern; how its greater power, its missionary success, its world-wide spread and universal triumph—even whilst the truth was overlaid with gross and false conceptions in faith and practice; how all was owing to the distinctness with which it held on to the positive features of Revelation (so

much so, indeed, as even to annihilate the subjective factor; and hence its apostacy from the truth); how, since the Reformation, the Lutheran Church, the first to move and boldest in the attack upon the claims of Romish priestcraft, soon yielded in importance and influence to the Church of Geneva, because the latter developed more clearly, and less encumbered by a subjective mysticism, the positive realities of the Gospel. And I might be pardoned for indulging myself here in a fond remembrance of the comprehensive spirit of our own beloved Church, with which she unites the claims of the freedom of individual conscience with the binding force of a positive Revelation; and of the well-balanced judgment with which she avoids the danger of two opposite extremes—antinomian licentiousness, and an oppressive, soulless dogmatism. But I will only appeal to the experience of every Christian man, and ask if such positive belief is not the very soul of his prayers; and if he would exchange his Father in Heaven, his Comforter and Friend and Saviour, whom he finds in the Gospel, for a mere phantom of abstractions? If he finds not more comfort and better strength, when realizing the presence of Jesus, who loved him first and sought him as he went astray, and who, in that He himself has suffered, being tempted, is surely willing and able to succour him in his temptations; when leaning on the faithful Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, that affectionately bears with him his sorrows and shares with him his conflicts, who weeps with him when he weepeth, and rejoiceth with him when he rejoiceth; if this Christian consciousness of the reality of spiritual communion, this realization of aid and comfort from above, does not arm him with greater fortitude than all the vague conceptions of mere philosophy; if he is not safe when holding on to the positive features of the Gospel, having the substance of things hoped for, the

evidence of things not seen ; if he is not sure to fall when leaving these green pastures, he feeds his soul in the sterile wilds of speculation ?

But we have thus been drawn insensibly into the consideration of the relation which the individual sustains to the revealed truth.

II. The individual, as the subjective factor, may, in his position to the objective element of Revelation, be considered—

1. *Actively*, that is, as apprehending and constructing the religious truths revealed. *And this subjective agency is absolutely necessary to make him a Christian.* However true it is, that Revelation comes from without—that it is bestowed upon man externally, given him from above, and as coming from the Sovereign of his soul, claiming his submission ; still *its truth must not remain external*, but be taken up within, and become in him the source of life and action, a well of living water springing up into eternal life. Faith is certainly required of him, and must stand him in stead of sight ; he must believe, where upon belief alone his premises can rest ; he must believe where demonstration necessarily fails ; he must live by faith and not by sight. But this belief must not be a blind superstition, without evidences ; not a submission to what any artful deceiver may represent to him as Revelation and God's will. He must examine for himself, and be able to “give a reason for the hope that is in him.” And his faith must not be dead ; a lifeless creed, a mere heartless assent to some intellectual and moral proposition ; but it must become within him a principle of action, affecting his every thought, word, and deed ; a guide of life, an energy, a heart-converting, life-reforming power. *Man must do his part ; he neither can believe and know, nor obey and pray, by proxy !* He therefore must first examine the record,

and from it draw his knowledge of the truth; he must search the Scriptures, and acquaint himself with God as there speaking to him; he must possess himself of its contents, and, by the aid of that reason with which God has endowed him, that he might know Him and hear His voice, he must master their meaning. He must be careful, indeed, to draw proper limits to the exercise of his reasoning and imaginative powers, never placing them above the given record; always submitting them to its ultimate authority; never, indeed, cut himself loose from this centre, and be allured into the byways and ramblings of the undisciplined intellect and heated phantasy of man; never venture to make himself the judge of Revelation, or put himself in opposition to its teachings, pretending to discriminate between what he condescends to admit as truly Divine and what he dogmatically declares mere human addition, and thus plunging into all the delusions of a proud but foolish infidelity. He must take God's declarations as he finds them, learn the mind of God from His own words, and find out the meaning of each oracle by the unerring light which others shed on it. He must hold on to this rock—which alone can afford him a shelter against the waves of doubt and delusion—but he must not neglect the right and duty of his subjective action; he must make it the subject of all his most earnest efforts, and most severe mental exercises. The Lord will not be pleased with a service which costs us nothing; the Lord will not excuse ignorance where the means of knowledge were within reach, and not allow His word, which is the guide to everlasting life, His truth which sanctifies, His love which conquers the stubborn will, to be treated with less respect and less care than those inferior laws and experiences which refer but to the cares and comforts of the body! *Man is responsible for his belief!* And the

knowledge of God thus gained must be the rule of his life. Faith is "dead, and can but lead to fear and the trembling of devils," which does not "work by love, and purify the heart." Man must not only search the Scriptures, but *live the Scriptures!* "Not the hearer, but the doer, of the word is blessed."

2. But the subjective element may also be considered *passively*, that is, as operated upon by revealed truth. And such is the power of the objective element in Revelation, that it is not only evidenced in those who are its disciples and followers, but also unconsciously, to some extent, in others.

Its power is thus manifested in the dark groping of all mankind after the knowledge of God; and, in fact, the cardinal features of all religion, be they never so much disgraced by superstitions, and debauched by abominations, bear some traces (however faint) of the original revelation given to the Father of our race, which no time and no return to barbarism have entirely effaced: *the sinfulness of man and therefore the necessity of atonement*, and *the incarnation of the Deity*, be it in the elements, or in the form of hero-worship, or in the Fetish of wood and stone. There is no prayer uttered, no worship paid, no offering brought, no victim slain, but to propitiate an offended or thank a pardoning God: for there is no hope on earth, no trust in heaven, but through an incarnate Saviour!

Again, it manifests itself in the search of many, amidst the real or apparent contradictions of outward claims, after a tangible representative of the objective factor, after an authoritative and infallible interpreter and dispenser of the truths and blessings of Revelation. This is the course of the individual whom the partial knowledge of God gives no rest; but who, unenlightened or indolent, hides the talent of his subjective agency, and forbears to search out

God in His own Word, and follow its guidance in the actual duties of life, and in the relation which he occupies directly and immediately to his God. This changes religion into fear, and is the mother of all superstition : it has at all times been the reason why people submitted to a sacerdotal priesthood, and clung to the mediation of men and sacramental charms ; in our days, I need not say, it is a main cause of the lamented defections and perversions to Rome.

But even in those who openly refuse the authority of Revelation its power is felt. Even if man resolves, he cannot cut himself loose from the influences of Christianity ; and though he may ungratefully spurn them, deny their reality, and rob God of the glory of the blessings he unhesitatingly appropriates, he is but the stipendiary, he is but the beneficiary of the blessings which Revelation has brought us. Even for the infidels of our days, Christianity has proved the great teacher—the Bible, even for them, is the great storehouse of the thoughts and vaunted truths of their systems ; in all their speculations they are influenced and irresistibly carried on by this very Revelation which they deny ; and owe all that they most prize and boast of, to that religion which they persecute !

But we must conclude, and can merely point at the Christian, the believer in the Revelation of God as affected by its energizing power. What is it that has changed the sinner to a saint ; that made the carnal man spiritual, and renewed the old man in the image of God ? What made of the child of the devil a child of God, of the enemy of Christ a member of his body, of the child of wrath an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven ? *It was not self, but God !* The power of the Highest let itself down upon him. *Grace* has saved him, and *nothing but grace !* Grace has freed him from the wages of sin and the bondage of death ;

grace led him to the only spot where the fallen creature can stand—to the foot of the cross! Grace taught his proud and carnal mind to bow and meekly pray, “Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!” Grace has enlisted him in the service of God, which alone is perfect freedom; grace gives him the chart, by which to steer his ark across the sea of life! Grace leads him on rejoicing towards his heavenly home, calms every fear, quiets every storm, and arms him for his earthly pilgrimage. His Bible in hand, supported by love unspeakable and wisdom unerring, he meets the questions of this life; its fears and terrors are gone for him; he is secure in the love of God; its jarring discords are hushed as he listens to the harmonies of Heaven; its ills are changed to blessings, as he sees in all the loving hand of a Father, and learns to say, “it is good for me that I have been afflicted;” its duties and trials are changed to scenes of triumph, as he goes about doing the work of God, doing it now, while it is the day, the appointed time, and doing it with all his might, to the praise and glory of his God and Saviour, knowing that “his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.” He meets his fellow man, but meets him as a brother; his feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, and all social strife falls, as if touched by Ithuriel’s spear, before the talisman of the Bible—“Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” He rises above the wisdom of the world, and seeks that wisdom “which makes wise unto salvation;” drawing his knowledge from the fountain of truth, he discerns spiritual things spiritually, and sees, reflected in the shadows of earth and time, the realities of eternity. He meets the evils of this earthly life, but they fade before his sight as he looks beyond, and has “respect to the recompense of reward,” in His presence “at whose right hand are plea-

sures for evermore." He learns that "the light affliction here, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" and rejoices that, like his Saviour, he shall "be made perfect through suffering." And when the last enemy draws nigh, and Death throws its shadow across his path, day begins to dawn more and more in his soul, and the last doubts are solved, the last fear allayed; he knows "that his Redeemer liveth, whom he shall see in his flesh, and his eyes shall behold;" from the depth of the grave ascends his Saviour's voice—"I am the resurrection and the life;" and from the height the echo returns the song—"Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." He feels that "death is swallowed up in victory;" and the light of immortality breaks upon the gloom of the grave as he sees Heaven open, and his Redeemer standing at the right hand of power, the crown of life in His hand, and the greeting of Heaven on His lips—"Welcome, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

The Modern Necromancy no Argument against the Gospel.

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XI.

THE MODERN NECROMANCY NO ARGUMENT AGAINST THE GOSPEL.

“If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out?” ST. LUKE, XI. 19.

IN the historical scenes of the New Testament, our Saviour stands surrounded by an afflicted multitude; and, with the sick, the lame, and the blind, appear the victims possessed by evil spirits. All are received with the same Divine compassion, and alike they all go away, relieved and rejoicing. It is a most simple and literal narrative. The demons tormented the sufferers; the demons spoke; the demons were cast out. A distinct portion of the power given to the Apostles, and promised to them that should believe, was to cast out devils; and the Seventy returned from their appointed journey through Palestine with joy, because the devils were subject unto them, through the name of Jesus.

For a long time after the close of the apostolic age, the ejection of evil spirits was deemed a familiar occurrence. That promised power was assumed with humble confidence; and at last the exorcist, as an ecclesiastical officer, took his place, not necessarily to work miracles, but to perform an act of faith and prayer to which, in such faith and prayer, every Christian was supposed to be equal. It is hard to assign a reason for believing that the early Christians were

mistaken in this; or to determine, in opposition to them, that demoniacal possession ceased with the lives of the Apostles; for the same primitive testimony which assures us that the scriptural narratives of possessions and dispossessions were penned by certain inspired writers, affirms that when the writers of that narrative were no more, the wonders were sometimes witnessed still.

The Inspired Record alludes also to other exorcisms, besides those miraculous cures of demoniacs which were performed by our Lord and His Apostles. The seven sons of Sceva attempted the act, unbelievably, but with the name of Jesus upon their lips; and, though they prevailed not, the demon answered them with vehement words and a furious assault—and the possession was as evident as if the exorcism had been triumphant. John encountered a man who was casting out devils in the name of Jesus, but followed not with the disciples; and, though John forbade him, the prohibition of the Apostle was not sanctioned by his Master. In the text, that unerring Master answered a blasphemous charge of His enemies, by appealing to what must have been a well-known example. They alleged that He cast out devils by the prince of the devils; it was the only explanation which remained; for the miracles could not be denied, and, rather than submit, the Pharisees and Scribes blasphemed. “If I,” said He, in reply, “if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out?” Interpreters, ancient and modern, unwilling to imagine that this power could be wielded except by the disciples of our Lord, have sometimes suggested that these, as being of the Jewish nation, are here called children of those by whom that nation was represented. But the suggestion could never have been prompted by the words themselves; and to term the Apostles sons of the Pharisees, is surely to do violence both to language and to

feeling. It may be better said that it was sufficient for the purpose of the reply, that the Jews attempted or pretended to cast out demons. The question then remains open, whether the demons actually fled at their command. At that time the general belief was, that such bad spirits took possession of the bodies and souls of men; and that they might be and had been driven out by angelic aid, by magic art, and by the prayers of holy persons. Whatever be the authority of the Book of Tobit, it confirmed opinions like these; and they were not without some seeming support from the history of Saul. No attack upon this popular belief is to be seen in these or in any other words of our Saviour. They left the hearer as free as ever, and probably even more inclined, to believe it still.

There is yet other testimony. The Jewish historian, Josephus, was born within some ten years after these words were spoken. He says, that he had seen the expulsion of demons through certain spells, the origin of which was ascribed to Solomon. He relates how such an exorcism took place in the presence of Vespasian and the Roman army. He says that the exorcist, to assure the spectators of the fact, set a vessel of water at a little distance, and ordered the demon, as he passed out, to overturn the vessel; and that when this was done, the skill and wisdom of Solomon, the author of the spell, were signally revealed. It is true that ancient historians abound in stories of incredible wonders. But the wonders related in the Bible would not be the less true, were they told by uninspired as well as by inspired historians; this historian, Josephus, lived in the very times when Apostles still cast out evil spirits, and he speaks of just such exorcists as those whose practices are mentioned by St. Luke at the very same period. He is an independent witness to two facts, the apparent possession and the asserted exorcism,—both of which

are implied in the very words of our Saviour, "By whom do your sons cast them out?" Had any of us been present with Josephus and the host of Vespasian, we might, with our present sentiments, have pronounced the exorcism an imposture on one side or on both. But had it occurred forty years earlier, in the presence of the Lord Jesus, how would He have spoken? The incantation He might have denounced; the exorcist He might have condemned; like those whom, even though they shall cry, "Have we not cast out devils in thy name?" He shall reject as workers of iniquity. But there is no more cause to believe that He would have directly denied the possession or the departure, than to wonder that, in the text, He does not pronounce the exorcisms of the sons of the Pharisees to be a delusion or an imposture.

It is beyond dispute that the Scriptures introduce to our knowledge a world of spirits, pushing its agency within the borders of this visible world, without other permission than that under which the arch enemy walks to and fro on the earth. Distinct from the blessed ministry of angels, distinct from the appearance of saints that have slept, this is an agency, powerful for mischief, and yet contemptible as well as horrible in its manifestation. These spirits dwelt—a multitude at once—in one wretched man or woman. They loved to hurl a lunatic boy into the fire or water, or stretch him on the ground foaming. They could find relief in driving a herd of swine down a precipice into the engulfing deep. They acknowledged the Lord and His servants with cries of desperate hostility, and obeyed with every wish to make stubborn resistance. Anguish, horror, and madness came with them, and with them fled away. The original Scripture terms them "demons;" a name not necessarily expressing, what was nevertheless their real character; not necessarily identical with that of devils, but

capable of being applied to any subordinate, invisible intelligences who could be known to man.

Such beings, half a century since, the unbeliever could not conceive. He derided their acts and denied their existence; and some Christian divines bent to the breeze, and wavered. The era of materialism had hardly passed its meridian. Men seemed not to feel that the world beyond the senses could be as real as the world which the senses recognise. Even Christians rather thought of the life to come as of a distant land, the reality of which, by a strong effort of faith, they could credit as they credited the miracles of the Scriptures, than as of a sphere which was all around them, close about them, as natural as what they saw, and only needing that a thin, slight veil should be lifted, to be seen indeed.

From age to age, the human mind vibrates to and fro; and not without an overruling finger. When the obscure phenomena of Mesmerism were whispered abroad, a revolution began. Suspected, ridiculed, suppressed, revived, confused, perverted, exaggerated, condemned, contradicted, they still made their way onward towards slow, but probably general acceptance. The possible action of the soul without the senses, but in intercourse with other souls and bodies, was established. A change came gradually over the floating mass of popular unbelief. Before, it questioned the possibility of a revelation; now, it promised to reveal more than the Gospel itself. It had attempted to undermine the majestic walls: it now went up, as if it would take wings, and from above poured down its darts upon the garrison.

This form of hostility, the Christianity of our age is called to overcome. It is in vain to meet it with the weapons which unbelief has just cast aside. Infidelity *was* incredulous; we must not simply adopt its abandoned incredulity.

That false and foolish wisdom which glories in believing as little as it can, is unworthy of Christian imitation. The facts of what in popular language is called Spiritualism, may be one thing or another; but simply to close our ears against all evidence, can neither convince our fellow men, nor satisfy ourselves. Feeble is the foundation of that faith, which does not believe, concerning the spiritual world, greater things than these. It may be, too, that God has shut up one of the paths trodden before by common Infidelity, that it might thus be driven into another, from which the transition to a true and humble faith might be more easy.

There is no necessary call, however, upon the Christian, as such, to decide on the real characters of these appearances. They may be natural, or preternatural; but they must doubtless be of the same order with those which he believes to have been witnessed in many past ages, from the days of Job and of Abraham downward; and they no more touch His higher confidence, than the faith of the patriarchs was shaken by the skill or power of magicians. Should they be human impostures; should they be simple delusions; should they be the operations of physical or psychical laws yet undeveloped; should they be deceptive communications from a world more evil than this; should they be anomalous and broken tokens from the sphere of the dead; or should all these characters be mingled, he is prepared for all. They will be made tributary, in one manner or in another, to the truth which God has revealed, and which God will defend. It is not my present task to explain them; but to show that, whatever be their real character, they furnish no foundation from which the revealed word of the living God can be successfully assailed.

I. Suppose them, if you will, mere impostures. It is a violent supposition. It is a supposition which I hold it quite impossible to entertain. All certainty from human

testimony is at an end, if we may presume that many thousands of our fellow-men, as honest, as sagacious, and as credible as any of the rest, have, in many different places, without concert, and without motive, unconsciously united to force the same strange lie, in the same strange manner, upon mankind. But, supposing imposture, can it be turned against the Christian Revelation, as if that were of the like nature, and sustained only by corresponding evidence?

Place then in the balance the wonders of modern necromancy, if such it be, and the miracles of the Scriptures. On one side are sounds which it is hard to distinguish from the slightest touches of the human finger; motions and elevations of a block of wood; spasmodic penmanship, which writes out rhapsodies or enigmas, poor common sense or utter nonsense, facts of the smallest value, or falsehoods of less than none. On the other side, the sick rise healed from a thousand beds; the blind receive their sight in an instant; the winds and the sea are calmed at a word; a few loaves of bread become the food of thousands; water blushes into wine; the voice of God speaks from the sky; the dead revive; the transfigured body shines like light; and departed saints return and are visible to mortals. If there could be imposture here, it must be, not in the facts, but in the narratives. Such miracles might be *told*, perhaps, by an impostor, but by no impostors would they be *attempted*. Their number, their vastness, their whole creative character, as utterly mock all ancient or modern imitation, as the insect clouds, the darkness throughout all Egypt, and the death of all her first-born, mocked the magicians of the court of Pharaoh. The miracles of the Scriptures would not feel the very breath of that storm of indignation which might sweep away these impostures of to-day, if impostures they were.

II. But possibly you suppose no impostures, but simple

delusions. You content yourselves, perhaps, with saying that the observers and the performers imagined, you know not how, what they neither saw nor did; exaggerated what they saw and did; and from some small incidents and coincidences, explicable or inexplicable, raised their ingenious structure, bewildering themselves by their own interpretations. It is an easy mode of disposing of a subject which we want leisure to examine. But then, no possible resemblance can be found between them and the mighty deeds of which our Redeemer said, "If ye believe not me, believe the works." When Lazarus came out from the sepulchre, it could be no delusion on any side. All men knew that, if not an abominable conspiracy, it was a glorious miracle. When the Apostles declared that they had conversed with their Master after His resurrection, and had seen the wounds in His hands and side, there was no possibility of delusion. They either promulgated a solemn, complete falsehood, or they spoke of what they had seen and heard, and their hands had handled, of the Word of Life.

III. Far more probable than the supposition of simple imposture, or of simple delusion, is that of the operation of natural laws, physical or psychical, but as yet undeveloped or unknown. Mind communicates with mind in modes with which science has but the most indistinct acquaintance. The brain, the nerves, the vital powers, the relations between the body and the soul, the magnetism of the human system, the channels of communication between the inner man and the outer world, the very nature of that world itself as contrasted with spirit; all this is a sphere of which little is taught us except by experience. If new experience should decidedly affirm the most startling facts, the old experience is not sufficient to justify by its own ignorance of such facts, the rejection of their

reality. It may very well be true that these phenomena may proceed from such causes, as well as other phenomena which can no longer be questioned, but which were once almost as wonderful. It may be that the mind, in certain states, may partake the thoughts of others without word or sign. It may be that it can control the movements of a body not its own. It may be that all the alleged disclosures from the world of spirits have been only the kind of reflection of what the mind was in itself or in other minds; a reflection clothed in fantastic forms like those of a revery or a dream. It may even be that the soul may assume something of the power which it shall wield in its disembodied state, and that the future and the distant may come within its dim perception. We do not know the limits beyond which our Creator may have decreed that the natural faculties shall never advance. We cannot know, while every other science glories in its discoveries and their application, that the experimental science of the soul may not bring to light its peculiar wonders. It ill becomes us to presume that no motions are ever to be perceived within us of powers which wait to spread their wings, when the worm shall emerge from the chrysalis, and fly upward. When we were children, it seemed quite as probable that a man in a trance might see what was taking place a thousand miles off at that moment, as that it could be told him by a current darting along a wire as swiftly as his thought. It is no settled law of nature that sight, hearing, and touch, shall alone communicate knowledge; or that the mind can exercise no physical instrumentality but through the bodily organs; no more a settled law than that mechanical powers are the only force which man can set in motion. Perhaps all which can be proved of the marvels so often asserted, may be but the results of laws which are yet to be developed, or which are involved in no peculiar mystery.

If it be so, is any unfavourable light thrown back upon the wonders recorded in Scripture? Could these also be the results of such laws of nature? The thought would confound every conception of laws, and leave no remnant of a distinction between the common providence of God and His extraordinary interposition. Then, indeed, if it were said that there could be no miracles, it would be said with equal truth that all events were miracles. We need not be careful to insist upon such a term as "the laws of nature:" the question only is, whether power beyond that which is placed within the reach of man as man has been exerted. Those who wrought the miracles of Scripture all professed that they wrought them by power not human, not inherent, but communicated and Divine. Their knowledge that such results would follow their words or acts, was not sought but sent. They studied nothing; they discovered nothing; they felt the impulse from God, and in His name they did the works which spoke the hand of the Creator as clearly as these wonders which are not miracles speak the hand of a creature. You can conceive that beings who can by their skill construct tables, can by their will cause them to move; but you cannot conceive that any other but He who breathed into man the breath of life, and made him a living soul, can breathe it into him again when he has ceased to live. You can conceive not only that

"——— old experience can attain
To something like prophetic strain,"

but also that the mind may strictly see what the eye cannot of some events which cast their shadows before; but you cannot conceive that any but those to whom it has been expressly revealed should unfold the counsels of the Most High, extending from the beginning to the end of all things, and embracing the scheme of all events, and the

great, gracious purposes of all. Such is Scriptural prophecy : not merely single facts, few or many, but the vast chain which links together the whole destinies of a fallen and redeemed world. Whether such miracles and prophecies be interruptions of the laws of nature, or dawnings of a highest law, higher than all our visible system ; they, to whom alone, of all mankind, the Almighty has permitted thus to do and speak in His name, and who thus did and spoke to teach us that which is holier to our hearts and souls than all else beneath the skies ; they were to us the messengers, the accredited messengers, of God.

IV. But we pass on to another supposition, which, to many Christians, seems by no means the least probable of all. What if these alleged disclosures from another world, through sounds or signs or letters, should be from the deceptive agency of demons ? Without affirming that they are, and I would not even seem to affirm it, we may say that, the more wonderful they may appear, the stronger will become the presumptive argument for that dreadful origin. Should the appearances become such that earthly and natural causes are plainly insufficient, there remain but three preternatural agencies : the ministry of good angels, the friendship of the departed, and the hatred of evil spirits. The ministry of good angels it cannot be, because it ascribes to itself a different character, and good angels could not come under a false aspect. But if the message proceed either from departed spirits or from demons, which source is most probable ? Little is proved by the assertion of the agents themselves ; since evil spirits would, of course, be deceivers, and might very well personate saints in light. If we had reason to suspect their presence, the very first lesson of prudence would be, to confide in nothing. Truth would, of course, be mingled with the falsehood ; the danger would else be too trans-

parent. Not for a moment should reliance be inspired by their assumed characters, nor by the truths which they tell; and as little should we be persuaded by the extent of their knowledge. Were it vastly more than it appears, it ought not to be heard with any amazement. For, to employ the somewhat quaintly expressed sentiment of Bishop Blackhall, "let it be considered that the Devil is very old, and hath had long experience;" and, we may add, let it be remembered that, low as has been his fall, he is still a being of faculties originally most glorious,

"————— nor appears
Less than archangel ruined."

The union of falsehood and truth, of subtlety and stupidity, of extensive knowledge and brutish grossness, of preternatural power and less than infantine incapacity in the use of instruments, is exactly what the Scriptural representation of evil spirits would lead us to anticipate, and is characteristic of an angelic intellect overthrown. Then comes the striking resemblance between the phenomena observed in those who are called the media and in those who, of old, were possessed by demons. In both, a mortal is placed between us and the alleged agent. In both, he acts against or without his will. In both, the effort of the unseen spirit to communicate is rude and awkward, and nearly abortive. In both, the frequent result or concomitant is lunacy, more or less miserable. In both, there is a certain compelled homage to the Gospel; and yet, in both, a hostility to the Gospel, avowed or disguised. Remember, too, that men have been met by these revelations, if such they be, while they were walking in paths which the Most High has solemnly forbidden. He has denounced, as a most dreadful sin, the practice of necromancy, which is simply seeking oracles from the dead. They who attempt such consulta-

tions may well encounter those whom they have not summoned. They may well look for the wages of their guilt in a bitter if not a fatal deception. And what, perhaps, is most of all, no other class of facts is known from sacred or profane history, which can sustain any such comparison, except those which are connected with demoniacal possessions. The dead have never spoken, unless when Samuel came to Saul, and when Moses and Elias were upon the Mount; and then they appeared and were recognised. Even if any of the tales of apparitions, by day or by night, in waking or in sleep, could be believed, yet were they at least apparitions, not noises, not spasms. But evil spirits, if we credit the Scriptures or ancient authors, have used the limbs and voices of men, to delude, to torment, and to destroy.

If these appearances should be the operations of such spirits—a thing, which I again say, I would by no means seem to assert—they must confirm, even while they strive to assail, the most peculiar disclosures of the Bible. It is almost as if we were transported back to the days when the strong man armed held his palace in peace, till the stronger than he should approach, and Satan should fall like lightning from Heaven.

V. We come to the utmost supposition: What if it were even admitted that departed spirits had made some rude efforts to communicate with the living, and had been permitted so far to prevail as to give a few vague answers to vague questions, in a manner allowed to be difficult and disturbed, and very often delusive? There surely is no adequate proof or plausible colour of anything like this. But, what if there were? What if necromancy, guilty as it is, should be but the more guilty for the reality of its results? In the mere fact there is no contradiction to revealed truth, could the fact be established that the dead

have spoken. The only questions would be, have they spoken that which is beyond revealed truth? and have they spoken that to which revealed truth is contradictory?

To be assured of the truth of any new revelation from sources like these, would be impossible, even though we knew that the voices were the voices of the dead. The channel is corrupt and forbidden, and therefore the disclosures may be deceptive. If the dead should even tell us that they are at rest, and describe the state in which they dwell, who could assure us that they were not false, that they might not be betraying us to the same ruin which had overwhelmed them, or that they were not mischievously sporting with our rash curiosity? How could we be certified that they were the persons whom they personated? But it is unnecessary to dwell upon the possibility of such deceit, since the whole mass of what has been pretended to be revealed in mere addition, not in contradiction, to the Word of God, is only such, as were it true, would have but the least conceivable value, would be but as the dust of the balance.

Contradictions, however, to the word of God, have been uttered, as from the world of the dead; and then the issue is directly raised between the Revelation which we have received through the Prophets and Apostles and the Lord Jesus Christ, on one side, and the disclosures which purport to come from departed spirits, on the other. They affirm what the Scriptures deny. They dispute what the Scriptures declare. Which shall be believed? Some of the very persons who are represented could claim no confidence while they lived, and death could not have entitled them to be heard in opposition to the voice of Inspiration. Of others we do not know whether they are indeed present, or whether some false spirits have stolen their names and imitated their manner and knowledge. But if they be

present, and be they who they may, the Christian believer can have but one answer: "Though an angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed;" "We wrestle not merely against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Not till the Redeemer shall return can any teachers, except the Holy Comforter, possess authority equal to that which we follow. The mere circumstance that the contradiction to the truth which we have so received, is one which comes from the invisible rather than the visible world, should have no more power to persuade us than the temptations to wickedness, which come directly from the Evil One, should have beyond those which assail us through mortals like ourselves. Thus it is with Christians: but for him who is not a Christian in belief, one mighty obstacle to faith should seem to be removed when he is persuaded that the dead are actually living. If he credit this, and imagine that they are speaking, why should he hesitate to allow at least the probability of a far clearer, fuller, purer and nobler revelation? One voice from the spiritual world should overthrow all the infidelity of the Sadducees of every generation who say that there is neither angel nor spirit.

It is even possible to imagine, in a matter so little understood, that several or all of these elements may be more or less combined; human deception, delusion, laws of nature still hidden, the influence of evil spirits, and even voices from the grave. Let them be thus united, if they may; they can prove nothing and disprove nothing, except as if they were separate. As little as the assaults of men, so little can the gates of Hades prevail against that pillar and ground of truth which Christ has built upon the rock.

This is the attitude, my brethren, as it seems to me, in which Christianity should encounter the attacks of what is

popularly termed Spiritualism. As at the beginning it met the pretensions of the heathen oracles, or of Simon the sorcerer, or of the sons of Sceva, or of the Philippian damsel with her spirit of divination, so must it meet the like pretensions in these latter days. When men transgress, it is not needful to decide whether they have more or less assistance from a world unseen. Enough for us, that, whatever it be, it is prohibited by a revelation which it cannot annul, or rival, or even imitate. Enough that we know that *we* have not followed cunningly devised fables; and that the word which we have followed shuts the gate against all other messages till the Lord shall come in His glory. False Christs were to arise, and false prophets: the one broad and safe command is, "Go ye not after them."

But, manifest as is the duty of Christians towards their own faith and their own souls, they have also a duty towards their fellow men who doubt or disbelieve the Gospel, and grasp at every other thread which can seem to them to be let down from heaven. We, whose whole religion rests upon a record so full of all which is miraculous, ought not to scoff at marvels because they are marvels; to condemn with severity all belief which may seem hasty; or to speak of the invisible world as if it existed in the Scriptures, and nowhere besides. The seeds of an unbelief even more fatal than that of Spiritualism might thus be scattered. It has pleased God to leave it to this day a question whether the rods of the Egyptian magicians were transformed only in appearance, by sleight and skill of hand, or in reality by infernal sorceries. We know not yet whether the oracle at Delphi guessed or prophesied. It is not yet quite decided how far the witch at Endor anticipated the actual appearance of Samuel. The same veil may hang over similar attempts, to the end of time.

Let it hang over them, if so it be; and let us content ourselves with pointing to the rod of Aaron, which swallowed up the rods of the magicians; to the true revelations, before which the oracles were silent; and to Him who came from the grave in the flesh, and passed into the heavens, because He had power to lay down His life, and power to take it again.

Religion suffers loss, if it place itself in a defensive position at the approach of every impostor or disputant, human or less or more than human. Strong in its array of truths, of wonders, of glories, all of them so indisputably and so dazzlingly Divine, it ought to come like its Master, "as one having authority," and to demand the full submission of reason and of conscience. We are empowered to say, "thus saith the Lord of Hosts," when we lift up the standard of the Gospel; and as at the name of Jesus the demons of old fled howling to the abyss, so will the spirit of delusion, whether it be the spirit of erring, mortal man, or a spirit from hell, flee before a simple, lowly, but strong, honest, and effectual fervent FAITH. Oh, may each hearer of these words have that faith, which is the gift of God, which takes its root in the heart, which lays hold upon the Rock of salvation, which justifies the sinner, which overcomes the world, and which enables us to cry, in using the original words of the Apostle, in every sense which they can bear, "O Death! where is thy sting? O Hades! where is thy victory?"

Socialism.

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XII.

SOCIALISM.

"Love the Brotherhood." 1 PETER, II. 17.

HIGH above the walls of the Church of Christ, the Banner of the Cross is flung to the four winds of heaven, inscribed with the legend (which he may read, who runs), "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world;" while, floating from the four corners of the citadel of Christianity, are these commandments of the Prince of the Apostles:—"Honour all men. Love the Brotherhood: Fear God: Honour the King." They inculcate Loyalty, Piety, Fraternity, and Philanthropy. They prescribe the obligations of each man to the human race, to his household, to his Maker, to his sovereign. They embrace our relationships to the world at large, and to our civil rulers, and to the Church Catholic here on earth, and to our Heavenly Father. And what more than your relationships, in their widest extent to humanity, in their endearing social and domestic bonds, in their political aspect towards the law and its executive, in their religious obligations to the Holy God, can any man desire to know? Are you a Philanthropist? Judge yourself by this test of philanthropy; and see whether or not, in deep humility, you "honour all men." Are you a Loyalist? Examine whether or not you are cultivating a spirit of subordination and obedience to those who have the rule

over you; for this is to "honour the king." Are you a religious man? Boast not of your piety, until every thought, and word, and deed, springs out of a filial "fear of God." Are you in the truest sense a Christian? Dare not say so, unless a Divinely generated Socialism kindles in your heart "love for the Brotherhood." So thoroughly do these maxims test our claims and character.

"Love the Brotherhood." I am, with Divine assistance, to enforce this text. The Brotherhood: *what is it? where is it? how shall we love it?* This is my theme; and *these*, the topics of my sermon.

I. What is "the Brotherhood?" Evidently the Brotherhood is something different from "all men." "All men" we are to "honour;" while, says the Apostle, the Brotherhood we must "*love*." And yet, as consanguinity causes brotherhood, so, I am free to say, that since God "hath made of *one blood* all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth," all men are brethren, by virtue of their common filiation to their father Adam. The human race, then, is *a* brotherhood. But still, *the* Brotherhood is something closer, dearer, more exacting of our love: more identified with ourselves. "*Honour* all men." "*Love* the Brotherhood." Brotherhood in the bonds of birth: the brotherhood of our homes, the being nourished at our mother's breast, the being nurtured at our father's hearth; trained and educated by parental culture, amidst the endearments all garnered up in sweet Home—is this "the Brotherhood" the Apostle speaks of? It is a brotherhood, indeed, so affectionate, so lovely, so associated with everything which the heart delights in and memory cherishes, that he is brutish and unnatural who loves not such a brotherhood.

* Yet this is not the Brotherhood of our text. It is but a type of the higher, holier, more enduring Brotherhood; a

brotherhood emanating from a new birth—a common sonship, correlative with the Fatherhood of God. The Brotherhood which we are enjoined to love is the fraternity in that family, wherein Jesus, the Son of God, is the eldest among brethren; it is a brotherhood of Christ, a brotherhood in Christ—a membership of Him, “of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” The Brotherhood, such as this, outgoes, in majesty and glory and immortality, all terrestrial companionships. It is manifested in one body, partakes of one Spirit, is called in one hope, obeys one Lord, confesses one faith, receives one baptism, owns one God and Father of all, who is “above all, and through all, and in them all.”

God is its author, not by virtue of creation, but by redemption. He has taken our nature into union with the Godhead, and so, by the incarnation of God the Son, man in Christ is become the Son of God; man in Christ is begotten of the Father, and we, by the new birth of God the Spirit, are made “members of Christ and children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.”

A Creator makes a being differing from Himself. But He who is the Father begets His offspring in His own likeness. It is, then, because we are “made partakers of the Divine Nature,” because we are begotten in the likeness of God, that He is our Father, and we are brethren in Christ Jesus; Christ in us, and we in Him; He the vine, and we the branches; He the only begotten Son of the Father, we begotten in Him, and adopted as Sons of God; He the heir, we joint-heirs with Him; He the eldest among brethren, we, in Him, *the Brotherhood*: this is the majestic fraternity, the law of whose union is love, whom the Apostle excellently styles *the Brotherhood*. It is the Church of the living God.

II. But *where* is it? Where is the Church of God, whose

token is brotherhood in the bonds of love? We read of it in the Bible. The Acts of the Apostles proclaim its being in the world. There were men, instinct with the life of God in their souls, who, loving God supremely, loved their neighbour as themselves; men who believed and consorted together, and "had all things common; who sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need; who, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." In view of the mercies of God they presented their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God. They deemed their devotion a "reasonable service." The poor man and the rich man were undistinguished by either wealth or poverty, but, recognising the true bonds of redeemed humanity, were brethren in heart and in deed. The cries of the orphan and the sadness of the widow found a response in Christian sympathy, relief in Christian beneficence. The chains of the slave rested lightly on his limbs, in the consciousness that he was the Lord's freeman. Servants obeyed, not with eye service, but as servants of God. And masters rendered unto servants that which was just and equal. In honest humility each honoured all men with a philanthropy that gathers within its circling sweep of goodwill to man, the human race. Each feared God with a piety that penetrated the soul, filling its mysterious depths with awe and love and joy. Each honoured the king with a loyalty subservient. Each loved the Brotherhood with affection ardent and sincere. The Bible tells us of these wondrous things, when Christians "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and the Apostles' fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

The question, therefore, returns with emphasis, Where

is the Brotherhood now? Where is it, in this our day? I answer: In the Divine will, it is where it ever was. The Church of God is still man's home; its fellowship is still man's hope.

Yet I cannot deny that the inquirer after it will find himself foiled in his search. He will discover, in its stead, a thousand altars, of sects diverse, of worship varying, of people marshalled in mutual warfare. Schism has rent Christ's body, and torn the seamless garment of the common Saviour. The law of Schism is, to divide; and division ends in disintegration. So that it has come to pass that men, in our generation, find themselves alone, with a consciousness of individuality intense, and morbidly alive. Feeling that "it is not good for man to be alone," they are trying to resolve the problem, the problem of life, that stirs up all within them—*How God has constituted society.*

This is the vast problem of the age we live in. It is not a problem to us, brethren, who know that we have received the Church of God in its integrity, and the truth of God in purity. It is not a problem to us, whose distinction is, that "we earnestly contend for the faith," whole and undefiled, "as it was once delivered to the saints." No well-instructed and intelligent churchman is perplexed with the question, Where the Brotherhood is to be found. He feels it, faintly perhaps and feebly perhaps; but he feels it as a real thing, a life, a principle, a motive, influencing his thoughts and shaping his conduct. Everything in his worship, everything in the polity of the Protestant Episcopal Church, witnesses to it. The sacraments seal the truth of our Brotherhood in Jesus Christ.

But think not that other men are so blessed as we are. The idea of Brotherhood floats before them. They see the beauteous vision, and stretch forth to realize it. We observe their earnestness, yea, their anguish, in trying to

secure it. I confess a sympathy with them. I never read a speculation on the theme of *Socialism* without a painful condolence of pity. Fain would I take my brother by the hand and lead him into the Church of Christ, and set him by my side at the foot of the cross of the dying Redeemer of the world, to look, believe, and live, pointing him to my Father and his Father, to my God and his God. I would tell him of all the redemptive acts of Jesus. I would even dare to promise him (though all things seem to contradict me), that with us, in the pure catholic communion of our Church, he shall find peace and joy and Brotherhood. But if he turns away and laughs at such pretensions, if he goes on constructing his own theories of Communism, Odd-Fellowship, Freemasonry, Mormonism, Trade Associations, Jesuitism, or even so-called Church Brotherhoods,* and the like, I tell him plainly that his fraternities are shams; his bonds are selfishness; his union a pressure from without, instead of the attraction of affinity; and that, when mutual

* When this lecture was read in Philadelphia, "Church Brotherhoods" were not included in the catalogue of reprobated societies. But, on preaching it elsewhere, Church Brotherhoods were named with the rest. The reason for suppressing all allusion to them I cannot now remember; but I conjecture the reason to have been, that I felt a reluctance to censure, by name, societies into which many of my dearest friends were gathering together, and which, I supposed, the tenor and drift of my discourse opposed. But I was taught my mistake directly I had finished my lecture in Philadelphia, being requested to make an address at the approaching anniversary as an *advocate* for Church Brotherhoods. The term "The Brotherhood," in the text, seemed to be identified, in the minds of some (at least) of the "brothers," with their society. I hence discovered the need of either a better argument than I had written, or a specific mention of the "Church Brotherhood" societies. And as I was incompetent to a better argument, so I was shut up to the alternative of mentioning Church Brotherhoods among the other experiments of Socialism. Church Brotherhoods, by their constitutions, exclude from membership young persons (below fifteen), and old persons (above fifty years), because they cannot pay and contribute their due quota to the treasury. Their weakness and want fail to be their plea for "Church Brotherhood" charity. This, I think, is not sound Christianity nor good Church charity.

interest shall cease to press his Societies together, the *individual*, prompted by his own intense consciousness of self, will swell with self-importance and start away, as with a centrifugal force, causing his associations to *detonate* into as many atoms as they have members.

Brethren ! While I thus speak of self-willed associations, I would also confess that Socialism seeks to supply a want—a craving want. Some hope to find a Christian Socialism in the Church of Rome, through the dreadful death of consciousness, where individuality and responsibility are swallowed up, submerged in the Confessional, where man ceases to be a man, and is only a fragment of the body ; where the *stupor* of the conscience, under the opiates of priestcraft, is miscalled *peace*.

But others venture on new experiments of Socialism, in which the human will is sovereign and not killed. These claim to have formed a Brotherhood. These boast of their philanthropy. These evince an ardour and a purpose, that engage the fancy, and attract the hopes of the panting multitude. They nourish the feeble ; they tend the sick ; they bury the dead with ostentatious demonstrations of respect ; they support the widows, and educate the orphans of their fellows. They join themselves in trade-unions, and combine their strength in strikes for wages. The poor man sees all this, wonders and acquiesces. “ Perhaps this is the Brotherhood with whom I should enrol my name,” he says ; “ this is the Church for me.” And so he buys a portion in man’s Church, and learns to despise the Church of the Living God.

Yes ! He *buys* into the concern, for the profit which is promised—then turns and tells you, “ It is a Brotherhood ! ” *A mutual insurance company*, excluding all who cannot pay and all whose payment would not refund the cost of their support, proclaims itself a Brotherhood, and takes profanely

on its lips the sacred names of mercy, truth, and love; falsifying each in turn. And yet men call this The Brotherhood, which they must cherish—which they commend to your regard and reverence—which they array against the Church of Christ! But the humanity of Socialism has no divinity in it. It is of the earth, earthy. It is the banding of men together, against the ills of life, “without God, without Christ, without hope in the world.” It battles to the grave—and there it halts. Its heathenism, though disguised in some of the beauteous robes of Christianity, can go no further than the grave. There, at that dark portal, it stops and trembles. Its vaunted Brotherhood is finished at the tomb. “It says unto corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister.” But can you wonder that the anxious longings for a Brotherhood should suggest these experiments of Socialism? Is it a marvel that men who toil for their daily bread, and earn no more than “the crumbs that fall from the rich man’s table”—that men who look abroad in vain for sympathy—who feel the woes and wants of their condition, as a cold hand upon their hearts, chilling their affections—should grasp the weapon (and wield it too) that defends their weakness, and procures them hope? Is it strange that the instincts of self-preservation, the sentiments of fellowship, the strong, irrepressible, invincible demands of justice should endeavour to command the tribute of your respect, and the recognition of their human rights? I look upon every combination of the trades as a protest against the covetousness of Capital. I look upon every society, proposing to ameliorate the sufferings of poverty and sickness and sorrow, as a protest against the lukewarmness of Christians. I look upon the Social experiments of every sort, that, in our age, are venturing to form Brotherhoods, as the voices of nature and the voice of God, protesting

against the Church. All these experiments are expedients for the realization of the Brotherhood which Christ organized and fixed, in the world, for man.

The philosopher has torn the gown of the theologian from him, and claims to be the better interpreter of the will of God. He snatches the Bible from the pulpit to preach fraternity, while the dogmatizing polemic is asserting systems of theology that divide mankind asunder. The philosopher perverts the word of Inspiration to give an aspect of divinity to Socialism; while the divine himself is perverting Scripture to reduce religion to a carnal philosophy, and deprave the Church to a school for dialectic disputation. That text which tells us how primitive Christians sold their goods, and had all things common, is pressed into the service of a selfish Socialism: ignoring the rest of that same text, which tells us that primitive Christians "*parted their goods to all men, as every man had need.*" And on the other hand, those Scriptures which record the love of Christ, are treated as sweet doctrines of a beautiful religion, while the duties which Christ's love commands, and Christ's example demonstrates for our obedience and imitation, are neglected in the teaching of His ministers.

The Church has suffered long enough in the stiff coils of these skeleton systems of dry theology—these barren inductions of false philosophy. The time is come to be *at work*. The time is come to look after men's bodies as well as souls—to deal with man's nature as God made it—to imitate the Saviour in curing distempers, and healing diseases, and giving liberty to the captive, and visiting the prison-houses of them that are bound. The time is come when the pride of place and power is to be rebuked, and the wages of the hireling, kept back by fraud, must be disgorged by the monster, Covetousness. If the true

Christian Brotherhood be not evinced in acts of charity for Christ's sake, a brotherhood of Socialism, that counterfeits Christianity, will supersede it in men's affections and men's faith. It will utterly blind the eyes of the multitude who follow their infidel leaders in the confederacy of Antichrist against the Church. Social organizations, working at first *beside* the Church, will at last *oppose* the Church. Already in the midst of us are societies, offering pantheistic worship, pretending to philanthropic ethies; and in training for any enterprise, whether against the state, the family, or the Church. Men are nourishing the viper in their bosom. But when the Church shall arise and shine—when the works of charity, and the tears of sympathy, and the self-sacrificing endeavours of a heart in earnest shall manifest our faith in the common Redeemer of all mankind, then will Socialisms have no work to do, no tears to shed, no efforts to make, no subjects to care for, no theory to demonstrate. The problem, “How God has constituted Society,” shall be demonstrated. Men shall discover where the Brotherhood is to be sought for, and where it shall be found; even in the one Holy City of our God, which hath foundations whose walls are Salvation and whose gates Praise. God and the Lamb are the light thereof.

III. And hence we learn, finally, How we must love the Brotherhood.

My brethren, I have avoided, as much as possible, all discussion of the political and metaphysical theories of Socialism, in order to grasp the one idea of every social system, viz. that of Brotherhood. How then shall the Christian love the Brotherhood? How manifest his love to the brethren?

1. In the first place, he must love *sincerely*. And to love *sincerely*, he must *pray sincerely* for all estates and conditions of men. Remembering them before Him who made,

redeemed, and loves them. Remembering them before Him who will not be mocked and cannot be deceived, unto whom all hearts are open, and all desires known, you will bear away from the mercy seat that unction from the Holy One, which will warm your heart with the love of Christ. Prayer, then, is the foremost means of grace, whereby to love the Brotherhood. He that loveth God will love his brother also.

2. And next, you must begin to exercise your love for your own *kinsmen after the flesh*, conquering the spirit of contention that disturbs the fireside of your homes. And you must learn to bear and forbear with your brethren of the same household.

3. And, enlarging the compass of your expanding heart, you must cease to strive with brethren of the same household of faith; you must think kindly of other Christians, who, from education or from self-will, are departed from the unity of the Body and live in Schism. Then, like the extending circuit of the ripple that a stone makes when cast upon the waters, your sympathies shall widen their diameter till the circumference of your love shall embrace the world. *The Holy reform must commence in each Christian heart.* The Spirit of God and of Christ must be its Author and its Finisher.

4. Besides this internal sanctification, the Christian must look to the example of his Master, and imitate the pattern of those primitive disciples who followed Him most closely.

5. And let me add that it would be wise to take counsel from the enemy, on the principle that "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Churchmen, therefore, must *assert* their Brotherhood, till, like living epistles, they are known and read of all men. Is the fellowship of Socialism witnessed in tending the sick? Let communicants be ready at the call of

their rector to watch and pray by the bedside of a brother, and in the hovels of the outcast. Does Socialism erect its hospitals, provide its schools, establish its funds for widows and orphans? Let the alms of the church be copious and overflowing, instead of being stinted in their supply, in order that from this source, and sanctified as gifts from off God's altar, they may suffice for schools and hospitals and asylums. Does Socialism display its fellowship in a numerous train of attendants upon funerals? Let churchmen emulate each other in paying the last rites at the obsequies of their brethren. And in the multitudinous calls for charity, let each be "a cheerful giver," counting his gains as the Lord's usury, esteeming himself as the Lord's steward. If the earnestness and the wisdom of Socialists be transplanted into the Church, our Christian Socialism shall flourish with blossoms of beauty and of fragrance, till they mature into the luscious fruit of brotherly love, the celestial taste of which shall evince that they have grown in the Paradise of God.

Brethren in Christ! love the Brotherhood! prove your faith by love! show your love by works! what I have feebly sketched exemplify! then shall opponent fellowships cease, and men shall say of us, "Surely God is with you of a truth."

Science and Revelation.

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XIII.

SCIENCE AND REVELATION.

The entrance of thy word giveth light. Ps. cxlix. 130.

THE ascendancy of man over other ranks of creatures seems to consist, not so much in what he has done more than they, as in what he may be which they cannot. His superiority lies not in his past so much as in his future; not in his deeds, but in his capacity to do more and better. That capacity is simply the capacity to be educated. Other animated creatures are impulsive; he is reflective. Inanimate things are subject to organic laws; he can conform himself to an ideal standard. Other creatures obey the law within them; he can reduce all impulses and instincts to the sovereignty of thought, and bend his consenting nature to an aim that lies outside of him. Other things grow; man improves. This peculiarity, while it denotes his superior rank, reveals, by the same token, his ineffable destiny. For, since rational principles are infinite, he may pursue them till he shall rise so high and range so far as to outreach our present conceptions of being. Drawn in his career of improvement towards the great central reason, to which, as to the inner loadstone, the universe gravitates, we can see him moving at a rate of constant acceleration, drawn at each advance with a more powerful attraction, vibrating less and rushing faster, until, by the magnetic affinity, he fastens himself for ever to God.

I have said that this capacity of being educated has a twofold significance. It is at once the token of man's supremacy and the pledge of his immortality. There has never, perhaps, been a period in history in which education, as a means of supremacy over nature, has been so highly esteemed as in this age.

But if you scan the methods and the ends of our common education, you will find that the capacity of being educated, as *a pledge of man's immortality*, is studiously ignored. The public teaching of this generation belongs to a sensual, not to a spiritual system. Physical laws are explored with the most brilliant results of generalization. The earth, the ocean, the air draw near with a sort of reverence, and lay their oblations at the feet of man's enthroned reason. Nature, in her telescopic vastness, unveils the bosom of her firmament to the starry eye of our astronomy, yields up her microscopic organs to the dissection of anatomy and geology, and betrays her hidden functions and affinities to the tests of chemistry. In this fruitful Eden of physical knowledge, the mind of the age revels and feasts itself to repletion. But in that vaster realm of metaphysics, by which I mean truths higher than physical, the general mind is more untrained. It is more an age of science than of principles and Divine philosophy; of ethics more than of piety; of things seen more than of truths felt. We are taught vastly more of man's relation to nature than of his relationship to God. The capacities of man prove that there must be a higher education for him than this love of nature, and a brighter light than the coruscations of science. For he has faculties nobler than the perceptive. He has the power of bringing himself into contact with eternal principles, of amalgamating his mind by reflection with Divine truth.

He has an eye that does not blench at the living glory

which floods the field of his immortality. That instruction which meets these higher capacities of man, is knowledge by way of eminence. It is education in its large and true sense. These thoughts, not new to you, have come back to my own mind with fresh power as I have revolved the subject assigned me for this lecture, viz., the relation of science to revealed religion. That relation has justly been regarded as one of subordination. Science has been familiarly called the handmaid of religion. It were only well if she would be contented to occupy that position. But no person can contemplate the claims of modern Science and not be struck with its assumption of superiority, a certain magisterial air, as if it had a sort of pre-emption claim to truth, as if its conclusions were not to be disturbed by any other truth known or unknown. Its conclusions are edicts. Its teaching is a royal proclamation. If it notices revealed truth in any way, it is only by turning its lantern towards the Bible just long enough to reveal a point of difficulty, and then stirring up the dust of doubt at every step, passes on relentlessly, as if it were under no obligation to relieve the Word of God of the odium it had cast about it.

It is this assumed superiority of Science over Revelation, which has done much to weaken the faith of many in our day. Sometimes Infidelity has levelled against the Bible the contradictions of history; sometimes the speculations of pure reasoning; but in our day it brings forth the objections of Materialism, and screens itself with scientific theory. I need not remind you how plausible and captivating some of these theories are. It is enough to say that their assaults upon Revelation are point blank. They are not content with simply maiming our faith in the Bible by lopping off some of its truths. They aim at the very heart of Revelation as a *system* of truth, so that if the

Science be true, the Bible is false, and all false. The relation of Science to Revelation then, in our day, would seem to be a relation of hostility. The position of one towards the other is a position of antagonism. I do not forget how often the discoveries of Science have coincided with the statements of the Bible. The catalogue is a long one of instances in which objections started by scientific explorers against the history of the Bible, have been confuted by further explorations. Many a side light of evidence for the Scriptures has glanced from the investigations of men who had no intention to corroborate the Word of God.

The frauds of the Hindoo astronomy have given a left-handed authority to the chronology of the Scriptures. Geology attests the recent origin of the human race. The Egyptian hieroglyphics have confirmed the Exodus. Nineveh has risen from the grave to illustrate the book of Daniel. The Pagan oracles have betrayed to the tests of Bishop Horsley their Israelitish pedigree. The tradition of the nations attests the Deluge. The best generalization of the races of men conforms to the three branches of the stock of Noah; and the scientific classification of the several languages of the world runs back into an amazing simplicity, and almost resolves the diversity into three primary forms; while the still more radical analysis of Kraitser traces all forms of language to their organic source, illustrates the Tower of Babel, and makes the confusion of tongues one of the most conceivable phenomena of social life.

So much has scientific discovery done to elucidate the historic past of the Bible, and it has not left the Bible future wholly untouched; for the scientific theories of human progress shadow forth a millennium, and the lost Pleiad foreshows the end of time and the conflagration of the world. These coincidences between science and the

Bible may sometimes serve to reassure the conviction of the believers in Revelation, and to pluck out particular objections from the mouths of cavillers.

Yet, after all, both faith and unbelief are vitalized not in the brain but in the heart of hearts, and are fed respectively from the purity or the corruptions of the moral nature. And hence it happens that though the scepticism of Science be often baffled, though its contradictions to Scripture be often refuted, its speculations shown to be fallacious by experiment, and its conclusions falsified by its own maturer knowledge, still it works on unperturbed by any discomfiture, dogmatizes its conclusions with the same quiet air of superiority, speculates as coldly, contradicts as boldly as if its whole history had been a refutation of the Bible. Some illustrations of this characteristic may occur as we proceed. Meanwhile we cannot but recollect the almost supercilious way in which the devotees of Science are apt, when the antagonisms between their conclusions and the narrative of the Bible are pointed out, to content all scruples by saying the Bible was not meant to teach the truths of natural science. And this easy plea has too often been borrowed into the mouths of Christians, as if it could extenuate the heresies of scientific speculation, as if there were any other way of determining what the Bible was meant to teach than by ascertaining what it does in fact teach. What though we learn from Science that it is the earth and not the sun which revolves, is the miracle of Joshua less imposing or true? Because the history describes the event as the standing still of the sun, does this language betray an ignorance of astronomy any more than when we describe him as rising and setting? Yet how often is this sample instance adduced to justify a contempt of the Scriptural narrative in analogous cases!

In contemplating this very striking characteristic of

modern Science, this cool assurance with which the Bible is made to take a second-rate position in every seeming difference between them, one can hardly help holding up to this eagle-eyed Science the text of the Psalmist, "the entrance of thy word giveth light," to impress the lesson it so much needs to learn, the first lesson of true wisdom, viz. modesty. One can hardly help asking in what consists the superiority of its claims to lord it thus over the Bible. Does its light shine further and clearer? Is its philosophy broader? Are its principles of reasoning more certain, and its results more sure? Does it educate the better part of man? the whole man for his better life, for his whole life? If not, it has no claim to the precedency it arrogates. If not, it is not *the light* of man. If not, no Christian should feel his faith disturbed by any invasion upon it which Science has yet made, or threatens to make. Let my following remarks be aimed at adjusting these rival claims, and vindicating the superiority of that Revelation, which, as it comes to us whole, cannot be disintegrated by us without peril to every part of the Bible.

Let the first point of examination be of the comparative certainty of Science and Revelation, its conclusions, and its method of reaching them. If the Bible be taunted with its sects and divisions of believers, its obscurities and enigmas, let us see if any of our human systems of knowledge relieve this distraction. Consider the necessary sources of that knowledge. We receive it all from observation—our own or other men's. If it be our own, we lean upon a single mind, limited in its powers, if not warped and crooked, whose experience, shut into the narrow track of one man's life, is almost contemptibly partial, and whose wisdom is apt to be in inverse proportion to the confidence of its conclusions. When the king of Siam refused to believe that water could become solid,

he betrayed only the bigoted ignorance of experimental knowledge, for there is no such bigot as the mere experimentalist; or if the experience be that of a philosophic mind—clear, enlarged, logical—it is still the experience of only one observer out of 1,000,000,000. The fixed condition of the universe is, that art is long and life is short. Knowledge is an abyss whose shores stretch into the viewless infinitude, and whose foundations are so deep that its dark waters are to us bottomless. But suppose the learner to mount higher. He embraces, in a bird's-eye view, the discoveries of other generations, the reflections of other men, the principles of General Science. Has he reached the pitch of assurance? He has indeed larger material for judgment; but the most remarkable effect of his enlarged knowledge will be, that his judgment will be ten times more cautious in its processes, and ten times less confident in its decisions. He learns, at last, the wisdom of doubting, and the folly of expecting a perfect knowledge of anything. No matter what the department of knowledge, where springs anything like certainty? Let it be History. History is but a lamplight, shining always with a flicker; disclosing a part, and concealing the rest; touching the topmost events with a garish light, and sinking into shadows the gentler neutral tints of life and manners which make the true complexion of the times. History sees only in perspective. She distorts, because she does not disclose the relations of events, nor the symmetry and proportion of life. She shines again from different stand-points. Even contemporaneous histories differ beyond reconciliation, and their unanimous statements are sometimes corrected by long subsequent discoveries. Let the subject be ethics, noblest and best, who shall guide us to certainty without a Divine teacher? Shall it be Plato or Aristotle, Machiavelli or the Schoolmen, or Hobbes, or

Butler, or Paley, or Bentham, or Owen? Shall we learn our moral rule of life from the outward or the inward, from nature or ourselves; from expediency or conscience? Shall we infer what we ought to do from what we are and are to be, or begin at the other end of the line, and learn what we are by seeing what we were made to do? Shall we determine morality from its effects, or risk the consequences because the morality is abstractly good? Let who will answer these questions; if he answer them from human oracles, he shall forthwith encounter a contradiction of equal authority, and find the thinking world rent and riddled into sects who hold their moral theories so profoundly that they cannot always bring them into exercise between each other.

Next, let the great theme be Political Science, the theory of government. Is there a fixed form of perfection for the state? Is it best for all times, all conditions, all peoples? Which best conserves the right, and which most advances the prosperity of a nation? Is the end that is lost under any given form of government more or less important than the end gained? No man can resolve these questions truly without a mind to contract itself to the minutest details, dilate itself to the broadest generalization, and protrude itself with prophetic ken into the unwritten future. He must detect affinities underneath differences, and discriminate the real unlikeness between things that seem the same. He must know the constitution of men, and the constitution of the world; the countless agencies that have made them what they are, and the not less countless influences that are shaping them hourly into what they shall become. The single men who are competent to one-half of this are more rare than whole generations of inferior men. The grand problem of government will not be solved till the world's history is complete, and he who

shall solve it must be a world-birth, and be endowed with a world of wisdom. Meanwhile the lesser men are tugging at the great question which they are not competent to lift, and he who should ask for the truth of Political Science turns away perplexed and baffled by mere speculation.

If from the height of this great theme we descend to the narrower range of Law—from law making to law interpreting—do we see clearer for being nearer? While precedent contradicts precedent, opinion thwarts opinion, the worse appears the better reason; the letter is made to neutralize the spirit, and plausibility carries it over honesty. This noble science, in its principles and design only next to religion, becomes in its application most irreligious. As a theory, it towers away into the skies as if it emulated Divinity, and Heaven crowns its peak with its own glorious light. Yet, as it comes near to men, its base is wrapped in dim and disastrous fog.

So much for the certainty of those sciences—ethical, political, and judicial—which have, one or the other, or all together, assumed the precedence of Revelation. But these are sciences of probability. Let us turn to those which claim a more solid basis and exacter processes, the sciences called Inductive. It is the boast of these that they are progressive; and, if movement be progress, they are rightly named. For the history of Astronomy shows how men may rest for ages in a theory which another generation shall explode. Now it shall be a Ptolemy who shall wield the empire of scientific opinions, and then Copernicus shall bring a new dynasty to the throne. One theory shall explain the phenomena of the world, except a few. Another supplants it, because it seems to satisfy those few. The beautiful hypothesis of the *nebulae* illustrates the whole plan of creation, unless some unlucky telescope pierces and dissects them, and proves that the only nebula

is the hypothesis itself. So that splendid as the facts of Astronomy are, they are hardly more imposing for the phenomena they explain than for the wonders they leave to be guessed at, and the whole firmament becomes a celestial arena, in which men's minds meet and speculate in the battle of opinions. Descending from the sky to the earth, we study the minuter organism of the world uncertain still.

Chemistry discovers a new simple substance, and she changes her theory of organizations, and with it her whole nomenclature. Medicine shifts its methods and systems like the fashions. Sthenic and asthenic divide the field and the fees. The humours and the nerves, each claims a theory. Pathology, with its rapid strides of progress, so far distances therapeutics as to leave the *cure* of diseases standing back at the period of Hippocrates. Once more descending from the earth, beneath the earth we reach the science of Geology, sublime in its depth as Astronomy in its height. Wrapped up in its embalmed shroud of mystery we find the earth's corpse, the dead spirit of antiquity with the world for its tomb. It unbosoms its fossil history as if the eternal Past were crystallized before our eyes; and scientific men would persuade us that the earth's history is only this side of eternal. No science has been so progressive as this; and there is hardly one besides which fills the mind with such prolific suggestions of knowledge. Yet even here there is no certainty. From the deep chambers of the earth we hear the clash of opinions and the murmurs of dissatisfied theory. How and by what were the phenomena of Geology wrought? Whether by water, or by fire, or by both? whether in succession, or simultaneously? whether at a fixed rate of power, or a decreasing? whether by steady progress, or by volcanic starts and spasms, opinions have not been agreed. With all its magnificence of

subterranean light, we wait upon Geology as doubtful petitioners for knowledge. Yet Geology is, no doubt, the favourite science of the times, and the one which strikes in severest collision against the statements of the Bible. Let us dwell, then, a moment longer upon those special grounds on which Geology rests her strongest objections to Scripture. Those objections are levelled mainly, in our day, against the Mosaic account of the creation. Now, while I would not deny that, by the laws of language and the usage of the Hebrew tongue, the first chapter of Genesis will admit of an interpretation which shall make the word "day" to signify a period of indefinite length, and so bring the Scripture into approximation to Science, by allowing a much greater antiquity to the creation of the earth, yet the exactions of Geology are so minute and so stringent as to provoke a retaliatory criticism. Is it quite plain, then, that Geology is all right and the old interpretation of the Bible all wrong? Do the principles of inductive reasoning so corroborate the claims of Geology as to entitle it to contradict the first chapter of Genesis? Let us see. The creation of the world is explained by Geology thus: The earth was originally a huge mass of nebulous matter floating in space. It parts with a portion of its caloric and becomes more and more consolidated, until its surface is cooled into a rocky crust, called, by the older geologists, the primitive or granitic formation, and enclosing, as its interior, a mass of incandescent matter in a state of fusion; from this primordial granite all the solid matter of the earth we tread on was subsequently derived. Dissolved by rains, peeled off by frosts, and triturated by currents, the minute particles, thus separated from the parent rock, have become again compacted into what are called the sedimentary formations. This process is supposed to be closely analogous to that by which deltas are formed at the mouths of great rivers, and

the delta is therefore the type of this whole class. This is a very summary view of the organic constitution of our globe according to the approved Geology. Now assuming this explanation to be true, and assuming that the great changes of the earth have always proceeded at the same rate of progress as we see them to be now going on, then a very simple arithmetic shows, beyond all peradventure, that the age of our earth must very far transcend the period assigned it in the Scriptures. The Scriptures therefore are discredited unless we find for them some new interpretation. Now, while I repeat that a different interpretation may be both admissible and best, yet is there anything in this theory of Geology to make it necessary?

The first peculiarity that strikes us in this theory is, that its premises are not only unproved, but, so far as our present knowledge goes, they are disproved. Its first fact is a mere guess, which has been contradicted by experience. La Place himself never dared to call his theory of the *nebulae* anything more than an hypothesis; and that which, before the construction of Lord Rosse's telescope, was a plausible conjecture, has been shown by that instrument to be a presumptive fallacy; so that this theory, so comprehensive and so imposing, rests upon a false fact. But even if its foundation were more true, what shall we say of its details? If the original crust of the earth was granitic, and all the sedimentary formations derived from it, how do we explain the immense production of limestone and of rock-salt, whose elements are not contained in granite? If the interior of the globe be a mass of liquid incandescent matter, how can we account for volcanoes, since, instead of expanding, its tendency would be to a constant contraction by cooling? And if deltas are to furnish the type of sedimentary formations, how is it that those formations grow gradually thinner towards their edges, contrary to the

common forms and habits of the delta, which always rises like a wall from the bottom of the sea, thickest at the margin? What reliance, moreover, are we to place upon the principle, that nature, in all these formative operations, has followed a uniform rate of movement, when it were far more scientific to argue from the known analogy of forces, which are always fiercest at their first combination, that the rate of progress would be constantly decreasing? Now, not to insist upon objections touching the supposed cooling of a nebula, not to dwell upon certain mechanical difficulties touching the supposition of an internal liquid fire, are not those already named enough to vitiate—yea, quite invalidate—the whole theory? Beginning with a fallacy, proceeding by assumptions which are irreconcilable with known geological facts, can it conduct the inquirer to anything like an authoritative conclusion?

And mark again the whole character of the reasoning involved in this explanation. Geology professes to be a science of Induction. The grand worth and power of its objections to the Bible consists in its claims to that exactness which belongs to Inductive reasoning. But at what single point in this whole theory does the principle of Induction crop out? Induction deals only with facts; with present and subsisting facts. It arranges them, classifies them, and eliminates the general principle which binds them together. But, whether in the single phenomenon or in the general law which pervades the group, the single aim of Induction is a present fact. The phenomenon is a fact, and the general law is not less a fact. Induction may show us convincingly, beautifully, the order and plan of the existing universe. But when Science attempts to fathom the modes and agencies of the past, it leaps the track of Induction as wildly and fatally as if it should undertake to forecast and prophesy the world's whole future. When it

infers the past from the present, it is not Induction; it is Deduction: a conjectural sort of reasoning which forfeits the whole character of exactness. And when, besides, it begins with a mere assumption of fact, and hangs its argument on this single loop, the argument itself is not reasoning; it is speculation: the theory is transformed into a whole unmitigated hypothesis, illustrating the adage that if we begin with an *if*, we may end as we please.

But I have said enough, I trust, to illustrate the uncertainty that clings about the methods and conclusions of Science, verifying the sarcasm of the poet, that "Science is but an exchange of ignorance for that which is another kind of ignorance." Carry your gaze where you will, and you find this infection and rottenness in it all. A science to be certain must not be progressive; that is, it must not be human. It must be divinely taught, and the truths it teaches must not be such as are useful to one set of men in one stage of life, one condition of the world, but touching the interests of all men in every age, for their whole existence.

Look to revealed truth, and find these elements of certainty there. There is certainty in the *quality* of the knowledge. The Teacher is one who knows; His knowledge is within Himself, and that which He reveals is the counsel of His own mind, the plans of His own wisdom, the decrees of His own will.

There is certainty in the *method of knowing*. We have a Teacher whom we are not afraid to trust, and we learn not by discovery or by speculation, but by faith. We drink in instruction implicitly. The truths revealed are so far above our explorations that no pride of reason can vault up to the platform of the Bible. We are sure, because we can never know enough to doubt, and all men stand together on one footing of evidence—"Thus saith the Lord."

This Science is not progressive, for we can learn no more if we would; nor fluctuating, because not lodged in human opinion but the Divine mind. The effect of this two-fold certainty is signal and delightful. As nothing is more corroding than a doubt on a subject in which we are enough interested to be anxious, so there is no state of mind so replete with satisfaction as the *assurance* of knowledge. The affinity of the mind for truth is met and satisfied. The truth itself has become a part of our consciousness and our inward life, and bestows such repose as approaches more nearly than anything else the mind's perfected bliss. There will be more of it in heaven, but on earth it has been divinely provided that the assurance of faith shall be the substitute for the certainty of heaven, and the joy of that faith the antepast of heaven's finished bliss.

From this grand defect of human Science, in its essential lack of certainty, let us pass, to consider more briefly another, viz. the want of breadth and comprehension in its principles. It is true, indeed, that the proper definition of Science is a system of general principles. And it is true that scientific men understand the difference between a man of rules and a man of principles. The man of rules is an artisan, the man of principles is an artist. The former is an empiric, the latter a philosopher. One declares the method, the other the reasons of the method. One points the telescope, the other discovers the solar system and invents the parallax. One may be very knowing, the other is wise. That one may be shrewd, this one is great. The best achievements of the human intellect lie in happy generalizations. It was the power to generalize which gave the prophetic eye to Newton, to Burke, to Washington, each in his sphere applying the master-key of a general principle to unlock the dark storehouse of future and unattempted things. This forecasting knowledge, although so

rare among men, as to be deemed almost a lucky guest, shows at least how a great mind soars after the universal, and how the mind should be disciplined in order to become great. Now while it is true that each separate science aims to eliminate the general laws which govern it, yet each one insulated from the rest, no one branch of Science is responsible for its conclusions to any other branch, and hence results an independency, and sometimes an opposition, which quite forbids anything like a universal system. What is wanting is a Science of sciences, a philosophy large enough to embrace and harmonize them all, and to bring the results of discovery into some simple form, which shall be the philosophy of the universe. This *is* the grandeur of the Bible. Considered merely as knowledge, it has above all others the capacity of universality. All its truths are world-wide. If it be law, how does it distil and condense all forms of moral obligation into the grand essential duty of love to God and our neighbour, the duty of all men in all time, in both worlds! If it be government and polity, how does it dispel the cloud that envelopes the dominion of the world, and reveal the Great White Throne of Him whose right it is to reign! How it teaches the grandest philosopher in the system of final causes! How it impresses us with the truth that all things are made for God! How it explains the changes of dynasties, the wreck of empires, the turning and overturning of the nations, showing that He sitteth between the cherubim, be the people never so unquiet, making these commotions one and all the permitted results of His sovereignty, permitted in order to illustrate and to usher in the covenanted, mediatorial reign of the Son of God!

Even if the subject be the motions of the physical universe, how admirably the Bible connects the Divine will with the changes of matter, and subordinates the material

to its due place of subserving the spiritual! This is what experimental Science of itself either cannot or will not do. It ignores the whole doctrine of *final causes*. Its induction resolves all things into men, mechanism, and law, recognises no oversight of nature, no changes of matter but such as are caused by mechanical necessity, and hence denies all miracles, and hence repudiates a special Providence. Experimental Science maintains that it cannot, consistently with the principles of Induction, go beyond simple phenomena, and has no right to infer a moral plan of the universe, because it cannot be weighed in balances or tested with acids. It is such a confession of narrowness and partiality, as makes it unnecessary for us to enlarge upon it in the way of proof. But it is this refusal to look for moral results, which renders physical science essentially atheistic: and this constitutes the third great defect. In consistency with the same principle on which experimental Science rejects the doctrine of final causes, it may deny a first cause. To the experimentalist, the world stands out as mere inert bulk. In examining and dissecting it, his mind acts mechanically, led or dragged on by one new fact or law after another, until, at the last-discovered fact or law, it halts. This is the terminus of Induction. Its last result is a law, never a person; an effect, not a cause. It can go no further. It can see no further. If he should reach forward one more step, to infer the unseen cause from the seen effect, that step must be taken in the dark. Induction holds him for ever, poised on one foot, upon the brink of that precipice which separates the actual and the possible. To recognise an Invisible Director of the world, is to reverse the processes of experimental Science. For the chief maxim of Science is to receive truth only on tangible evidence. She brings forth her principles in tangible form. Her rule is "handle me and see." She sets the

inquirer down before the mighty machinery of the world, and when he grows bewildered and dizzy with amazement, she takes him to the upper platform, and shows him the one great wheel that moves the complicated works, and bids him then be satisfied. This is her ultimate stand-point. She tells no more, for she can see no more, and Science walks by sight. If he asks for a First Cause, grander and higher than this grand second cause, he asks unscientifically. The question springs from some Divine instinct of religion which Induction does not recognise, and must be answered by some lore which the wisdom of this world never taught.

If Science taught religion even in its elementary form, we should still have been blessed with a pious Newton, but should never have heard of an infidel La Place.

But even when Science, either physical or moral, in the person of some of its followers, acknowledges the fact of a Deity, see with what a constrained air, with how little emphasis, she makes the acknowledgment! See what a pale reflection it is of Divine light from second-hand evidence! How like the cold glitter of phosphorescence in the black ocean! It reveals no personal God; and, least of all, does Science constrain us to anything like moral allegiance to its discovered first cause. This must be so from the very nature of the proof and the investigation. The truths which men *discover* are their servants, not their masters. When a man of science has, by the action of his own mind, developed some hidden law of nature, some general principle of life, that discovery is as if it were his own creation, which might have been lost to the generations but for him. As one of the forces of the world it is an agent, not a lord; to be used, not obeyed. No matter whether it be in physics or in morals, the truth has been subjected to man's authoritative tests, has been fused in the crucible of his own mind, has passed under the die of his moulding power;

and when it comes forth for the currency of general thought, it bears the image and superscription of man, not God.

How differently does the Bible teach the truth of a Deity ! not by the cold glitter of mere intelligence, but by the living sunlight, whose light is warmth ; and not only teaches, it exhibits Him. If Science ever indicates a God, she only points to the darkness where He dwells, and leaves us unimpassioned and unimpressed. But the Word of God is His manifestation. He comes near to us in it, lays His hand upon us, draws away the veil of conjecture from our eyes, makes the whole splendour of His attributes shine into us, penetrates us with a new sense. We are no longer guessing scientifically at a simple, barren existence. He is no longer a philosophical abstraction, a First Cause, nameless and bodiless ; but a living, powerful, moral Master, your Lord and mine. The profoundest instinct of our natures, which had slept through the moonlight of our scientific studies, is waked up suddenly by the flash of morning, the glow of eternity. It shines out from the mind of God, and when it penetrates the mind of man, it stirs the world within him to live and grow. It is the day-spring from on high.

Did Science ever dream of a God incarnate—the mind and heart of Deity coming out to us through our own warm flesh and blood, and trying all the cords of human sympathy, to make us know and feel the God within us ? Did Science, physical or moral, ever hint at the august truth of a present God, the consoling fact of a superintending God, the sublime and terrible view of a judging God, the felt grace of a redeeming God ? Did Science ever say more, essentially more than this : “ here is something before us ; a world, a mass of matter ; let us see if we can extract something out of it.” And that something, if it be extracted

at all, legitimately or illegitimately, what is it? The very zero of theological truth, viz., a possible intelligence, of which Science can positively affirm or deny just nothing.

In this comparison of Science and Revelation, I have thus far considered them in those points in which they come together and stand side by side. I have aimed to show that, regarded merely as systems of instruction, human Science has no well-grounded claim which entitles it to precedence; that though Science and Revelation both spring from the unity of Divinity, yet that, in the present state of human Science, the believer in Revelation may stand firm in his position of faith, and demand that Science shall grow older and stronger and wiser before he will lift one foot from the platform of the Bible; and that until Science shall attest itself by more certainty in its methods and conclusions, more universality in its principles, and a less atheistic spirit, he will still continue to wait on the Lord and rejoice in the light that comes from the entrance of his Word. Until that time, Revelation, as the grander power of the two, may exercise a majestic patience. It can afford to wait till Science has so far fledged its wings as to soar into the skies and see by the light of God, and then Science and Revelation will be at one.

But, before I conclude, I ought, in justice to our high and holy theme, to glance at one consideration, which displays the value and power of the Word of God, not in comparison with Science, but as standing alone in a position which Physical Science never assumed to occupy, and which Moral Science only vainly emulates. Regarding Divine Revelation as an agent for the education of man, we ought to consider its character for moral influence. See how it lays hold on all the motive powers of man, and the conscience first. Assuming the moral sense as a universal attribute, it appeals to it directly, with such authority that,

whether man obeys or refuses, he feels that he is yielding to or resisting his God and Maker. And, next to the conscience, the Word of God addresses the hopes and fears of the soul by promises and threats the most soul-stirring. The love of life, the love of happiness, the love of excellence, the ambition of an honourable place in the esteem of all good beings, these are the impulses of hope, stirred up by the promises. Oneness with God, an eternal companionship with him, boundless knowledge, boundless bliss, and spotless purity covenanted for ever, these are the promises that move the hope, powerful, ennobling, good, and perfectly good.

On the other hand are the fears stirred up by the threats. The dread of woe, dread of death, and dread of degradation before the universe, these are the instincts of nature, energized to agony by the thought of separation from God and all the good, and of communion for ever with the foul and the fallen, increasing hate, remorseful sorrow, world without end. If we search our natures through, there are no hopes and fears supreme like these. If we explore the whole realm of thought, there are no objects of hope and fear so commanding. And when these fail, and when they succeed, there is one sanction more penetrating to the heart and seizing the affections; it is the appeal of gratitude to all men for incalculable mercy to each, the appeal of redeeming love. Wherever it is felt, it is felt beyond expression and beyond resistance, with only the regret that it cannot be felt more deeply. Nothing in earth or heaven can take the soul captive, lead it willingly away from its sins, bow it down in delighted adoration, melt it into a flood of thankful penitence, and raise it up a changed and transformed soul, like the love of a bleeding Saviour. He who resists it resists Heaven's last attempt at moral influence. He who obeys it yields to the moral omnipotence

of God, exerted on the most vital forces of the human character.

And now, mark the operation of these forces, and trace the growth of the character trained thus by the Bible. While he who is educated by any form of Science alone, without the Word of God, leans on his own understanding and follows a fool's guidance; while obeying his uncorrected impulses he stumbles when he thought he was safest; while, with no standard but his self-erected one, he may prostrate it as he pleases; while with no master but his will, he is the foot-ball and plaything of those passions which are more wilful than his will; while thoughtful only of the world he becomes, like it, the very vanity of vanities. Not so the faith-trained man, whose light is from the entrance of God's word.

Seeking all things from above, he schools his spirit to the patient waiting upon God. Strong in God, when weakest in himself, he is fortified for trials that would else overpower him. His life is not fitful, because his standard is unearthly, planted in the Rock of Ages. His belief is not opinion, and does not flow and ebb with the fashion of thinking. He is gentle from the humility that is in the habit of bending before God, yet courageous with the ambition of having God for his own. It is the beautiful moral of faith. It is the highest fulfilment of the law of his being, the noblest working of regenerated manhood, than which a seraph's is not nobler, who at the Eternal Throne adores and burns.

And now, with another word, I close this discourse, and with it, as I am informed, this course of Lectures. It is fitting that the course should conclude with the Bible. It is well that the preacher's parting word should be of faith in the revealed Word of God, which giveth light. Hold it in its wholeness as the best teaching on all subjects which

the world has seen yet; true on all subjects, even though partial on some, and full enough on every subject necessary to educate us for immortality. Hold it supreme, sacredly high above all other teaching, for that which the world cannot teach, the redemption of the world, which the world never thought of, and Heaven never thought of but once. In this one truth is the light which is the life of men. In this one truth are garnered up all human interests, all human relations, duties, and destinies. Men have no concern with any knowledge that is so vast, so profound, so vital. The world's existence hinges on the redemption by Christ, and Heaven's central glory is the Crucified. He who has not studied Redemption, whatever else he may have learned, knows nothing yet as he ought to know it. He who has been taught this Divinely, is wise above all other lore. It comprehends the life-principle of all other knowledge, explains terrestrial events, will survive terrestrial things. It will be the starting point of our immortalized minds, will be the impulse of our immortal growth, will make the perfection of our likeness to God, to know Christ and Him crucified. Hold the Bible then sacredest and best, not only for its certainty—surer than any other knowledge—not only for its deep and wide philosophy of men, of things, of the universe; but far away and above all other reasons, hold it as the Revelation of a Saviour for the lost.

The Historical Evidences of Christianity.

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XIV.

THE

HISTORICAL EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

“For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?” DEUT. IV. 32.

THE religion of the Gospel, my brethren, as presented to us in the inspired pages of the Bible, is guarded by every defence, and enforced by every argument, which can be fairly demanded, either by the intellect or by the heart. Opposed on all sides by the spiritual enemy of our race, by the corrupt and sensual propensities of our fallen nature, and by the cavils of infidel sophistry, under the abused names of philosophy and science; it rises from each assault with renewed confidence in the truth of God. For no attack on Christianity has ever resulted in success. No weapon formed against it has ever prospered. On the contrary, it has triumphed in every contest, and still goes on, conquering and to conquer. And how? By what human power? By what human influence? By what human interest? Where are its mines of gold? Where are its fleets and armies? Where are its resources of earthly government and territory? Where are its motives of ambition, avarice, or pride? Where are its allurements of worldly pleasure; its supremacy in worldly knowledge; its

command over worldly learning, science, or policy? Without any of these—nay, rather against them all—Christianity has gained its pure and peaceful victories through the might of heavenly truth, and the force of the Divine blessing. If it were a device of men, the hostility of men would long ago have overthrown it. But because it is of God, the opposition of the world, and the enmity of Satan, combined together, have never been able to prevail.

It is not my design, however, on the present occasion, to explore the vast field of evidence which is laid open by the sublime claims of the Christian system. To other and to abler advocates I shall leave the varied aspects of the noble subject which the infidel tendencies of the present day have called upon us to examine; and I shall confine myself to a brief review of the single proof derived from historical facts, which no intelligent mind can question, in the full conviction that even this alone is all-sufficient to demonstrate the celestial origin and Divine authority of the Gospel. May the Spirit of the living God be graciously present with us, that the humble effort be not made in vain!

I undertake, then, to establish this broad proposition, that the heavenly truth and power of Christianity, as it is set forth in the Holy Scriptures, are inscribed in characters of living light on the whole face of history. And I ask your best attention, my brethren, to each step in the argument as I pass along.

1. Commencing with the Old Testament, look, I pray you, at the historical facts which prove its truth beyond the possibility of refutation. For the entire nation of the Jews are witnesses to their own marvellous descent, laws, and religion, all mingled inseparably with prophecies and stupendous miracles, and marked by a totally peculiar principle of polity, standing alone amongst the families, tribes, kingdoms, and empires of our world. No other

people ever existed, as a distinct nation, who traced their existence from one man, as they do from Abraham. No other people of antiquity possessed the knowledge of the one true God, clear of all idolatry. No other people were delivered from bondage, without war or violence, by the display of Almighty power; sustained miraculously for forty years in the wilderness, and established victoriously over seven nations more powerful than themselves. No nation beside the Jews had a form of government so free, benevolent, and equal; where every family had its own allotment of land; where justice was administered so fairly; where there was no room allowed for tyranny upon the one hand, or licentiousness upon the other; where brotherly love and kindness and charity were commanded by the very laws; and where the whole system, from the worship of the Sanctuary down to the smallest regulation of domestic life, was all held by the express dictation of the Almighty. No nation beside the Jews could boast of possessing a clear continuous history of four thousand years; beginning at the creation, and proceeding almost to the coming of their great Messiah; all written by holy men, who claimed the gift of Inspiration, and proved it by prophecies which have been so wonderfully fulfilled. And no nation, unassisted by Divine power, could have subsisted as they have done; for more than seventeen hundred years have passed away since their country was taken from them, and their city Jerusalem, with its magnificent temple, was razed to the ground, according to the Divine prediction, and they became dispersed and despised throughout the earth. And yet they have refused to abandon their ancient faith. They have refused to amalgamate with others. They have remained, all over the world, a distinct and peculiar people, for almost eighteen centuries together;

and still continue to maintain their marvellous individuality even in our own day.

Here, then, I place the first great series of historical facts, which is totally incontrovertible. No cavils of infidelity can ever overthrow it, because it stands, like the sun in the firmament, single and alone, as a light to the world. The unbeliever, indeed, undertakes to account for the whole by supposing that Moses, the great lawgiver and leader of the ancient Jews, was only a skilful impostor, who deluded the people. But it needs a thousandfold more credulity to accept this hypothesis, than to receive the records of the Bible. Assuredly, if we admit the being of a God, all those wonders might have taken place without any difficulty; whereas, if we imagine that Moses was an impostor, the whole history becomes a gross and absurd impossibility. For how could any impostor persuade the nation of the Jews, amounting to more than two millions of souls, that they were led out of Egypt, sustained in the wilderness, and established in Canaan, by the very power of God, displayed by the most public and open wonders, if those wonders never took place at all? How could an impostor undertake such miracles as those which were witnessed by that extraordinary people? Let the infidel collect all the lies of heathenism together, and he will find nothing to be compared, for a moment, with the stupendous works of God displayed in the sight of Israel. Nay, I confidently aver that the mind of man never conceived so vast and amazing a series of astounding manifestations. And how could an impostor address his history to a whole people as Moses does in the Book of Deuteronomy, appealing to them as eye-witnesses? How could an impostor reveal to mankind the only system of pure religion, full of precepts of benevolence, purity, and truth? Would an impostor lead a life of the utmost self-denial, labour, and simplicity, as

Moses did, without even leaving to his own sons any office of pre-eminence or dignity? Could an impostor prophesy to his own nation a future history of calamity, oppression, and desolation, as Moses did to Israel, all of which we know to have been fulfilled? Could an impostor deliver to the world laws, religion, and principles, which were adopted in after ages by all the most favoured nations, and are believed at this hour, as firmly as ever, though empires, and races, and systems have risen and fallen, and three thousand four hundred years have rolled away? Could an impostor, with a succession of other impostors, predict the most remarkable events of all future time,—the destructions of Nineveh, and Babylon, and Tyre; the debasement of Egypt, the subversion of the Greek and Roman empires, the ruin of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews, the coming of Christ, His suffering and death, and the establishment of His Church, all of which we know to have been accomplished? No, no, my brethren! This hypothesis of the infidel is the wildest of all absurdities. When we believe that the infinite foreknowledge and power of God were employed on behalf of His people, there is no difficulty. But he who refuses to believe this, is forced to believe a thousand impossibilities at open war with all human contrivance and capacity.

2. Here, then, in the wonderful career of the literal Israel, we have the first great historical demonstration of the truth of God, in the Old Testament. And we have a parallel to it, not less convincing, in the establishment of the Church, the Spiritual Israel, in the New Testament Scriptures. For no man can deny the one, any more than he can deny the other. **THE CHURCH EXISTS.** This fact is notorious. How and when did it come into being? The heathen historians all agree with the Bible that its founder was Jesus Christ; that He was crucified at Jerusalem in the

reign of the emperor Tiberius; that His followers were poor unlettered men; that their converts increased rapidly throughout the old Roman empire; that they were bitterly persecuted, from time to time, during the first three hundred years, because they opposed the heathenism which was everywhere established. And every one knows, that soon afterwards their religion was triumphant over the civilized world. The Scriptures account for all this by showing that this religion was the fulfilment and completion of the previous system, given to ancient Israel; that Jesus was the Son of God, who became incarnate for the salvation of mankind; that His ministry was marked by constant miracles; that He died upon the cross as an atonement offering for the sins of the world; that He arose from the dead, according to His own prediction, and ascended into Heaven; that the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles, and enabled those ignorant and humble men to proclaim the most sublime and pure system which was ever known; that they went from place to place, in labours, in toils, in danger, and in sufferings, according to the command of their Divine Master; and that everywhere, by their preaching and their miracles, the power of God gave them success in converting multitudes from the horrible superstitions of Paganism, and a life of sin, and thus established the Church, which has descended to our own day.

But all this, too, the infidel treats as an imposture. And in so doing, as in the other case, he tries to get rid of an imaginary difficulty, by embracing real and absolute impossibilities. For in truth, this difficulty of the unbeliever is no difficulty at all, when we admit that God loved the poor fallen world which He had once created, and designed to give mankind a Saviour to redeem them from their sins, and prepare them for life and happiness eternal. But how should an impostor undertake a work like this? How

should the unlettered son of a carpenter have invented the sublimest system of holiness which was ever known amongst mankind? And what motive could have induced our Lord to deceive His followers? Was it the love of wealth, when He chose poverty for His portion? Was it the love of power, when He refused to be made a king? Was it the love of ease, when He led a life of persecution, and submitted to be crucified? And what motive could have governed His Apostles to imitate His course, and become, like Him, willing martyrs to the cause of His Gospel? And whence did they derive the wondrous power which enabled the poor fishermen of Galilee to do a mightier work beyond comparison than all the sages, philosophers, and priests that ever existed since the world began?

Thus the plain truth of history stares the infidel in the face, and demonstrates, of necessity, the Divine truth and power of the Gospel. For the Church of Christ is established, and is, at this very moment, notwithstanding all our faults and imperfections, the mightiest power upon the earth. And this Church, by the infidel's own acknowledgment, was founded by a poor mechanic of Nazareth, who was persecuted by His countrymen, and was crucified between two thieves, in the reign of the emperor Tiberius, and His instruments were twelve poor ignorant men, of the lower orders, while the thirteenth, St. Paul, though learned for his time and country, was utterly destitute of rank, connexion, or authority, despised by the Romans because he was a Jew, and hated by the Jews when he became a Christian. Could it ever enter the head of thirteen such men to go forth for the purpose of overturning, by lies and imposture, the religion and philosophy of the whole world? Is it conceivable that these impostors should have devoted themselves to such a wild and ridiculous attempt, in the service of a crucified man, whom they

must have known to be a deceiver? Is it possible that a company of foolish and crazy knaves could have gulled mankind so completely, that their converts were ready to go to prison, and to death, for a lie, which any reasonable mind might have detected, when their claims and their actual performances were compared together? Is it to be believed, for a moment, that the Apostles, who must have known the cheat, should have been themselves willing to pass thirty or forty years of life in constant toils and dangers, and at last become willing martyrs to the falsehood? And could all this have succeeded throughout the most civilized and enlightened countries of the heathen world, in overturning the philosophy and the religion of every nation, notwithstanding the opposition of princes and rulers, laws and customs, arts and eloquence, in the palmy days of the old Roman empire?

Hence, I maintain that the infidel, in refusing to believe the Divine truth of the Christian religion, rejects the plain testimony of historical fact, and gives his mind up to the most absurd impossibilities. In all the annals of our race, there is no other instance of an assault upon the established religion and morals of mankind, by such an instrumentality as that of the poor fishermen of Galilee. In all the records of humanity there is nothing to justify the preposterous notion that such an assault, by any earthly management, could have been crowned with success. While, on the other hand, there is no reason whatever for doubting the love or power of God. Why should not the Almighty have pitied the fallen and ruined condition of His creatures? Why should He not have revealed His truth and mercy, and given them the means of returning to holiness and happiness? Why should He not have provided them with a Saviour, and brought life and immortality to light in His blessed Gospel? In believing all this, we believe

nothing which is not perfectly accordant with the attributes of the Almighty. While, in rejecting it, the infidel believes a mass of absurdities, totally impossible to the powers of human nature, and in direct and palpable contradiction to all the motives, capacities, and conduct of mankind.

3. The third branch of this evidence of history leads us to consider Christianity as the only moral and spiritual enlightener of the world. Thus, it is well known to every ordinary reader, that the old Greeks and Romans were highly civilized in everything else, while they were utterly debased in morals and religion. Their writers are used, to this day, as masters in all our schools. Homer, Æschylus, and Sophocles amongst the poets; Herodotus, Xenophon, and Thucydides amongst historians; Pericles and Demosthenes among orators; Aristotle, Plato, and Epictetus among philosophers, gave the brightest lustre to the literature of Greece. And, amongst the Romans, Virgil, Horace, and Juvenal, Livy and Tacitus, Cicero and Quintilian, Seneca and Lucretius, with a long list of others, shone with equal brilliancy. In architecture, in painting, in sculpture, these ancients were confessedly pre-eminent; and the world has never exceeded them in individual examples of patriotism, and magnanimity, and heroic valour. But their religious faith was a mass of falsehood and corruption. Saturn, the oldest of their imaginary gods, was believed to have devoured his own children, and to have been dethroned by his son Jupiter, who was the sovereign of the gods, and held his court on Mount Olympus. His history was a picture of corruption and debauchery. Juno, his wife, was called the queen of heaven, and was a vixen and a shrew. His daughter, Venus, was the patroness of all licentiousness. Bacchus was the god of wine and drunkenness. Mercury was the god of thieves. Mars and Bellona were the patrons of war. True, indeed, the vir-

tues had their appropriate deities likewise, but all of these were inferior in power, and were held to have no dominion or prerogative which could be compared with those of the superior gods, whose whole administration was marked with every crime of human profligacy. While all these celestial powers were supposed to be subject to the Fates, or Destiny, represented by three old women, against whose decisions Jupiter himself could do nothing.

Of course there could be no true morality in union with such a religion, because the gods themselves were believed to be examples of every favourite sin. The laws of the land did, indeed, preserve those precepts which were essential to the defence of life, liberty, and property; because, without these, society could not be held together. The philosophers, also, taught many sublime and pure truths, which were adopted by their disciples. They maintained, likewise, a future judgment, founded on the rules of moral virtue. But this judgment was not committed to the gods. Three deified mortals, who, in their lifetime, had been kings, were supposed to be the judges; and thus virtue was entirely divorced from religion, and only supported by the common standard of human law and sentiment. Hence, their wisest and best men indulged, without scruple, in unnatural lusts, despised the popular superstition, while they honoured it outwardly, and wandered, without any resting-place for the mind or the heart, in the midst of spiritual darkness and confusion.

Such, briefly, was the universal condition of the most enlightened nations of the world, during those classic ages, whose monuments of literature, eloquence, and art we still delight to honour. The Jews were the only exception; because they were taught of God. Their dispersion throughout the countries of the heathen, though decreed by the Divine judgment as a punishment for their sins,

was overruled by Providence so as to make them the instruments to disseminate the truth among the heathen. Their sacred writings were more ancient, by a thousand years, than those of Herodotus, the oldest Greek historian. Pythagoras lived five hundred years before the advent of Christ, and all the other philosophers were still later. The whole of these, therefore, had abundant opportunity to learn, from the Jewish Scriptures, those principles which so many unreflecting men have thought fit to ascribe to the unassisted light of nature. From the books of Moses, Lycurgus might easily have taken the best parts of his famous system for Lacedæmonia. And Solon, the lawgiver of Athens, had equal access to the same fountain of truth, which was alike open to Numa, of Rome, and all the other sages of antiquity. So striking was the similarity between the sacred records of Israel and the system of Plato, especially, that one of the old Fathers asks, "Who is Plato, but Moses speaking Greek?" Besides this, however, it is obvious that some portion of the Divine truth, which was held by the patriarch Noah, must have descended from him to all the nations of the earth; and hence, it is manifest that we can readily account for the historical fact that a certain amount of God's own teaching was still retained amongst the awful corruptions of heathenism; enough, like the glimmering stars in the darkness of the night, to shed some feeble radiance upon the eyes of the spectator, but not enough to dispel the deep obscurity, or guide the traveller through the prevailing gloom.

But I must ask your attention to another and a later period in the history of Europe, when even this classic light, such as it was, was scattered by the irruption of the barbarian hordes upon the old Roman empire. Look back, then, I pray you, upon the condition of Germany, Austria, France, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, England, and the rest.

What were all of these, our own ancestors, eighteen centuries ago? What were most of them, even four centuries later? Every reader of history knows that they were heathen savages, but little superior to our own native Indian tribes, in religion, learning, or civilization. And what has made them such as we now behold, but Christianity? What but the labours and the miracles and the heavenly teachings of those poor apostles of Galilee conquered the corruption of Greece and Rome, and enlightened the gross barbarism of the rest of Europe? And was not this wondrous work of human improvement a worthy cause for the incarnation of the Son of God, when the subtlety of Satan, and the insane folly of the human heart, had wrapped mankind in the thickest clouds of idolatry, cruelty, and licentiousness, and nothing could regenerate them but light and power from Heaven?

4. And this leads me to observe the fourth historical proof which demonstrates the Divine origin of our holy religion, namely, that the Bible alone has restored to woman her true place of dignity and importance in the social system of the world. Search the records of all the nations; go abroad at this day through the territories of the heathen and the Turk; and everywhere you will find that woman is debased to be either the drudge and slave, or else the sensual plaything of the stronger sex; and nowhere but among Christians can you see her in her true position, as our counsellor, our companion, and our helpmate; the teacher of our early years, the dearest comfort of our home, the encourager and supporter of piety and religion, and the strongest bond, as well as the brightest ornament of society. Nothing short of a Divine power could have wrought such a revolution in the domestic and social feelings of our race; and the infidel, when he seeks to discredit it, not only destroys all hope of the future life,

but digs the grave of the most precious blessings of this present world, which have survived the ruins of the fall.

5. I shall only add, as the fifth and last historical proof, the unquestionable fact that the Bible has impressed its stamp of purity and benevolence upon all the governments, laws, institutions, and customs of the best and mightiest nations of the world; and that those are the greatest among these nations, where its Divine authority is best maintained, according to the rule laid down by the Almighty: "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach of any people;" "Those that honour me I will honour, and those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." I mean not to say that any government has yet appeared, which has been wholly guided by Christian principle. Far from it. The Saviour himself declared, "My kingdom is not of this world." But I do mean to say, and I say it most confidently, that the Christian religion has modified and restrained the evil, and stimulated the good, in the whole history of our race, wherever it has planted its standard. It has moderated the fierceness of war. It has cherished the arts of peace. It has sweetened the bondage of the slave, when it could not free him altogether. It has purified literature, painting, and sculpture from their old licentiousness. It has abolished the ancient severities of the rack and the prison-house. It has diffused the blessings of education. It has guarded the oath of office, and of judicial testimony, by an appeal to the Searcher of Hearts. It has elevated the whole moral sense of every civilized community. And at this moment, in spite of all the enmity of Satan, and the opposition of misguided and insane men, the Bible is the great book of the ruling nations of the world, and all the good attempted or achieved among them is connected, directly or indirectly, with its controlling influence.

What now, I beseech you, has the unbeliever to allege, against this mass of historical evidence? First, he cavils at the war which the Almighty directed against the wicked and idolatrous Canaanites; as if God did not know when it was right to exterminate a race of most flagitious sinners, and deliver them to the sword of justice. Yet the infidel himself approves the principle which governs the earthly judge, when he condemns the murderer to death, and orders the sheriff to execute the sentence. Why then does he deny the prerogative of the Lord, who is the judge of all the earth, to condemn a most abandoned and depraved people, and commission Israel to execute the sentence, for the very purpose of impressing them with a deeper sense of hatred for the sins which had thus incurred the Divine displeasure? So far is this from being really open to objection, that it is a strong example to mankind of the principle which guides the government of God. In the same way, the Almighty has always been directing the scourge of war, pestilence, and famine. The infliction, in every case, is doubtless a chastisement of sin, as it was in the case of Canaan. And here, indeed, we might well ask, what does the unbeliever gain by supposing that all the calamities in the world are the result of chance or accident, or, at most, of human ignorance or folly? He does not deny that there is a God who created all things, and thus far he professes to agree with the Christian. But is it not absurd to imagine that God abandons His work to itself, as soon as He has made it, and thinks it no longer worthy of His government and care? Would the infidel praise the wisdom of a man who should employ his utmost power and skill in constructing piece after piece of the most exquisite machinery, and then cast them all away without any further attention? How infinitely more just and rational is the doctrine of Christianity, that all the events

of this life are subject to the controlling Providence of the Almighty; that judgment is appointed to the rebellious, and mercy to the obedient, and that the whole complicated system is regulated by His wisdom, so that ultimately all things shall work together for good to those that love Him.

Next, however, I may briefly notice the trivial cavils of the infidel against the miracles, which he sagely condemns as contrary to experience, because they were only granted on special occasions, connected with the early history of Israel, and the first establishment of the Church. But here again he talks absurdly, because it belongs to God's wisdom, and not to ours, to determine the times and the seasons when the state of mankind called for those extraordinary manifestations. The proof of miracles is written on the face of history, as I have already shown; and as it is impossible to account for the facts of the Jewish narrative on any other hypothesis, without utterly subverting all the rules of human evidence, and equally impossible to account, without miracles, for the establishment of the Church, we are compelled to admit them on the highest reason. Certainly no man who allows the being of a God, can deny that He may work miracles when He deems it necessary. And it is equally plain, that as God is the only competent judge of the necessity, it is our duty and privilege to praise the goodness which employed them for the vindication of His government, and the establishment of His truth and mercy in the salvation of mankind.

The third objection of the infidel is usually directed against the fact that Christianity, in the hands of the Pope of Rome, was the cause of innumerable wars, persecutions, cruelty, and bloodshed, far surpassing the worst periods of heathenism itself. But here, too, is a most unwarranted assumption. None of all this was the work of Christianity, as we see it in the Bible; but, on the contrary, it was the

work of reckless ambition and human policy, in alliance with superstition, avarice, and pride. And the Scriptures themselves derive from those melancholy facts a new evidence of their Divine authority, because they predicted the falling away of the Church from its original purity, and the reign of an antichristian power, who, sitting in the temple of God, should bring in a long period of corruption and iniquity. Yet even through these ages of darkness and despotism, the religion of the Bible was transmitted down, from generation to generation, until at length it was reinstated in the face of the world by the glorious Reformation of the sixteenth century. And since that blessed event, it is notorious that Christianity has exerted the best and purest influence against all that is evil, and in favour of all that is good and true.

Lastly, the infidel objects to the strifes and discussions among Christians themselves, and points to the blots and imperfections of their lives as decisive proofs of the insufficiency of the Scriptures, and the uncertainty of their teaching, so inconsistent with their claims to be a Revelation from Heaven. But in this he ignorantly mistakes the true principles of judgment, by confounding the Word of God with the infirmity of men. I grant that the strifes and discussions of Christians are sad proofs of human weakness. I grant that the inconsistencies of professing believers are a mournful evidence of defective faith. But what Christian Church was ever known to cast the blame upon the Bible? Or what Christian man ever denied that the fault was in himself alone? And what right has the infidel to say that the Scriptures, in the authority of which all Christians agree, are the source of the varieties in which they differ?

So far, however, are these defects from furnishing an argument against the Christianity of the Bible, that they

afford, in truth, a direct evidence to demonstrate its Divine inspiration. For there we read that, notwithstanding the establishment of the system of God in ancient Israel, the tendency to corruption produced a sad decline, so that their idolatry and wickedness brought down upon them the severest chastisements, and finally provoked the Almighty to give them up to national ruin. We read, also, the distinct prediction, that after the decease of the Apostles, men would arise in the Church, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them; that the time should come when men would be proud, boastful, and rebellious, having the form of godliness but denying the power thereof; that by reason of this, the way of truth should be evil spoken of; that there would be a general declension of the life of faith, so that iniquity should abound, and the love of many should grow cold; that before the second coming of Christ in judgment, it should be as it was in the days of Noah, when the deluge descended and destroyed them. All this, and much more, the Bible itself declares; and hence, the very divisions, strifes, and worldliness of Christians, which are so absurdly insisted on as an argument against the Scriptures, are in reality a perfect demonstration that they could only have for their author that omniscient God who seeth the end from the beginning.

The infidel, therefore, is inexcusable in the rejection of that only Divine religion which brings life and immortality to light, through the precious Gospel of our Lord and Saviour. The differences amongst Christians, however deplorable, only prove the more forcibly the authority of that Bible, in which they all agree. And the absurdity of raising an objection to the truth of religion out of these differences is palpably evident from this, that the caviller takes good care never to follow the same course in anything else. He knows, perfectly well, that there is truth in law,

although lawyers disagree; that there is truth in medicine, though doctors differ; that there is truth in government, though politicians quarrel; that there is truth in morality, though the world is full of villany and selfishness. And he understands, likewise, that on all those subjects the best proof of truth lies in the very fact, that there is a certain amount of authority in which all parties concur, and to which they all appeal, as so much common property. Why, then, does he refuse to apply the same reasoning to the Bible, when he knows that all Christians, without exception, acknowledge it as a revelation from Heaven, and only dispute because they do not follow the same principles of interpretation? If we should think that man a fool or a lunatic, who rejects all law, all medicine, all government, because lawyers, doctors, and statesmen are seen perpetually to disagree, what should be thought of him who rejects the religion of the Bible, because Christians differ?

I have no doubt, however, after the observation and reflection of many years, that all the infidelity of our day is mainly attributable to the sin of wilful ignorance. Indeed, I believe it impossible for any man to read the Scriptures through, with a serious and candid mind, without a firm persuasion that they contain what they profess—the Word of God, which maketh wise unto salvation. And in this lies the crime of infidelity, in the sight of Heaven, that the Divine Record is rejected at second hand, without a fair and full examination; that the cause is decided without an impartial hearing; that Moses and the Prophets, the Saviour and the Apostles, Martyrs and Confessors, the whole Church of Christ, and the mercy and love of God Himself, are all condemned, without a fair and honest trial; and thus the poor infidel treats the only hope of a dying world, and the salvation of his own soul, with less attention and regard than he bestows upon the

lightest matter of earthly property. O, how shall he answer for this high contempt, when he stands before the Judgment Seat? How shall he justify the devotion of his noblest faculties to every object of sensual appetite, and sordid gain, and fleeting honour; while he disdained to listen to the words of God, and scorned the offered inheritance of life eternal? May no such criminal scorn, my beloved brethren, be charged on any soul amongst you! May you all have grace to acquire that knowledge, and secure that happiness, which the blessed Redeemer has promised to bestow on every sincere seeker! Then you will see, for yourselves, the majesty, the purity, and the wisdom of the Gospel system. You will pity and wonder at the blindness and prejudice of unbelief. You will behold the demonstration of Divine truth in all the great events of history. And you will experience, above all, the power of that precious religion, which alone can take the sting from death, and the victory from the grave, and give you that peace which passeth understanding, which the world can neither give nor take away.

The Internal Evidences of Christianity.

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XV.

THE

INTERNAL EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." ST. JOHN VII. 17.

THE internal evidences of Christianity hold an important place in the argument for its truth and Divinity. No amount of external evidence could prove that our religion came from God, if its system were inharmonious or inconsistent with itself, if it were unworthy of the Divine character, or unsuited to the condition and destiny of man. We therefore need its internal evidences to complete its proof.

As usually stated, this argument is not sufficient *independently*. The purity and excellence of religion, its utility and benevolent tendency, or its perfect consistency and systematic beauty, prove, only, that it is *worthy* of God. Although we may infer that a scheme so Godlike did originate in the Divine mind, still, the question of fact must be determined, as are all similar questions, by sufficient external evidence. In this view, the internal evidences are chiefly valuable to the sincere inquirer or to the practical Christian.

A conviction of the inherent excellence and benevolence of our religion prepares a sincere inquirer to receive, and predisposes him to believe other proofs of its Divine origin. Whilst seriously examining them, he will lightly weigh neither historic testimony, the evidence of miracles and prophecy, the analogy of natural religion, nor the concurrent facts of science; feeling that his highest interests are vitally staked upon the conclusion to which he shall arrive. In the view of a practical Christian, the internal and external evidences of Christianity exchange places; the internal become primary and positive, the external, secondary and supplemental. For his *experience* of religion is worth more *to him* than the resolution of any number of historical or scientific doubts, or the multiplication, to any degree, of human witnesses and miraculous testimony. A miracle has been wrought within himself by the power of this religion—he has a witness within himself to the substantive value of this religion—which fully suffice for his self-conviction. Nor is this persuasion visionary. It is perfectly rational. It is according to a natural process. “We are conscious in our inmost souls that, since we have embraced this heavenly religion and faithfully followed its precepts, we have enjoyed peace and happiness, and possessed strength for holiness unknown before.” It follows that it is the only means of promoting and securing tranquillity of mind, spiritual power, and true happiness. From such a conviction we pass, without an interval and in despite of theoretical difficulties, to the conclusion, that Christ’s religion is true and Divine. Such a result, inwrought by our experience, is quite as satisfactory to ourselves as the mere intellectual result of reasoning upon external evidences. If there be a choice, the practical Christian is more sure of the Heavenly origin of his religion, from what he has *felt of its effects*, than the most profound

reasoner, who, from its external proof alone, has determined it to be a speculative certainty.

Such is our Saviour's thought. And we have placed his language prominently before you, not properly as our text, but simply as His expression of the value of the internal evidences of Christianity. Nor, although we do not intend to develop this idea, can we omit to reiterate His instruction to every seriously-minded inquirer. If any man will know, with absolute certainty, whether this doctrine be of God, let him do God's will. It is the test of experience. The doctrine practised will approve itself.

Yet, to set forth this value of the argument to the sincere inquirer and the practical Christian, is not sufficient for our present purpose. We shall not be satisfied unless the internal evidences of Christianity present to every intelligent and honest hearer an argument equally logical, whether he be interested to believe or disbelieve the truth of religion. We are not content that the internal evidences should be deemed subordinate to the external, or that they should lose their proper influence, even upon sceptical minds. We hold them to be co-ordinate, and, at least, equally convincing.

There is a mode, I think, in which this argument can be stated, so as to 'elevate it to its rightful position: by which it may be taken out of the category of secondary and probable proofs, and placed among the primary and positive. And, for the purpose of this argument, we shall appeal only to your knowledge of what are professedly the characteristic doctrines and intentions of Christianity; and what are your experiences of the characteristics of our human nature. We shall not assert that the doctrines are true, or the intentions sure to be realized, except so far as general experience testifies to them; but we shall only ask credit for the fidelity of our statements of them.

From the fitness of things, we may always argue their purpose and design. The adaptation of the eye to light, of the ear to sound, of the lungs to the chemical properties of the atmosphere, prove a Divine purpose in constructing one for the other. All the adaptations of the human frame to the external world, exhibit the hand of a wise and benevolent Designer; and the conclusion is held to be legitimate and true, that since the world and men are what they are, the nice fitting of their physical relations could have proceeded from no Being less than Divine. The force of this argument turns upon the knowledge and skill required for adapting two distinct organizations to each other; and its power increases in proportion to the complications of the organisms. Using the familiar illustration of a master in this logic, the construction of a time-piece requires skill, and proves the existence of its maker. But how much more, we may add, if that time-piece be so adapted to the changes of the atmosphere, as to alter its own power with each alternation of heat and cold, moisture and dryness! And yet how much more positively still, if that time-piece, not only changing with the fickle atmosphere, also follows the variations of the sun, and, through every moment of a year, exhibits not only the apparent, but the real time! Such illustrations indicate the line of thought, but are feeble representatives of the wonderful adaptations of the human body to the universe in which it abides.

The argument rapidly increases in value, as we ascend from the merely physical to the mental, social, or spiritual world; and consider how marvellously, at each step, the relations of the human being to that which is about him, becomes intricate and complicated. Yet to all these conditions he is *adapted*. The foresight and wisdom which made all these worlds, physical, intellectual social, and

spiritual, and *adapted* man to live in them all, are not less than Omniscience.

If now there be any force in such an argument, to prove that man is the offspring of Divine skill, with still greater force does it prove, that *the Christian Religion is from the authorship of God*. For, supplementary to this creation of man, after all his relations to this various world, physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual, had been fixed; after the complications of his being and conditions had been made what they are, the Christian Religion was formed for him, and *adapted* to him and to them, so as to meet every condition of his complex existence.

Observe the problem: There is given, a world of men; in nature, rational, sensual, affectionate, religious, mortal, and immortal; in social position, bound together by curiously interlacing ties of family, civil and general relationships; in spiritual condition, fallen and depraved beings, yet capable of indefinite moral improvement, and consciously destined for present and eternal happiness. There is required, a scheme of religion, holy, benevolent, consistent with itself, Godlike, which shall answer every condition of the question, supply every spiritual necessity arising out of whatever relation, adapt itself to every changing mood of human thought, to every varying phase of human manners, to each variety of Providential state; and, when rightly applied, according to its own laws, capable of satisfying every human being in the world. Will any mind less than Divine undertake to contrive such a religion?

Let us observe the problem worked out: *The adaptation of Christianity to mankind*. Man is a *rational* being. Reason, combined with the power of perceiving the moral quality of actions, constitutes the peculiar characteristic of humanity. The Christian Religion, therefore, presents

itself to men as rational in all its statements, and as submitting all its evidences to the test of reason. But Christianity is consistent with itself in not submitting all its truths to the measure of human understanding. As revelation, and not reason, is the source of its doctrines, it is perfectly rational that some truths, being in accordance with the Divine, should be superior to the human reason; not, indeed, contrary to it, but above its sphere. Christianity represents the objects of religious faith as belonging to the spiritual world; they are, therefore, from the very nature of the case, incomprehensible to man; and Christianity would be irrational did she demand of reason to go beyond her sphere in attempting to comprehend them. She requires a faith which is rational, *i. e.*, which is conformed to the laws of our thinking nature; and she submits all the grounds of this faith to the judgment of enlightened human reason. To have done more or less would have been to utter a discord amongst the harmonies of man's reasoning soul; to have done this is to have adapted herself completely to his rational nature.

Man is a being of *sensation*, fitted to a world of sense. There is no greater peculiarity of his nature, than the impossibility of communicating with the external creation, or reaching the sources of its pleasures, except by means of his senses. These wonderful contrivances form that "golden bowl" by which my soul drinks from the fountains of delight, benevolently scattered among material things; and when this pitcher is broken at the fountain, even before the silver cord is loosed, my soul is separated entirely from this fair and beautiful creation. The Christian religion, therefore, addresses itself to cultivate and purify the pleasures of sense. It directs the soul in the choice of proper objects for indulging her bodily sensations; instructs her to discriminate between the intended and perverted employ-

ments; teaches her their source; and in all, advises her to receive these gratifications with a worshipful spirit, as boons from a benevolent Creator. So that the Christian may find ever new delight, as he goes forth into the world of sense. His eye never tires of seeing pictures of a Heavenly Father's skill and beautiful mind. His ear never wearies in listening to the harmonies of Nature, or in drinking in the good cheer of human voices, attuned to heavenly thoughts, or the comforts and solaces afforded by communing with kindred spirits, in a friendship consecrated by the love of Christ; and every pleasant touch of a material thing thrills through his soul as the touch of a benevolent Deity. If the Christian religion had neglected these relations of man to a world of sense; if it had omitted to educate, elevate, and purify the pleasures of sensation, it would have proved inadequate to its purpose. To have dealt so wisely with man in this relation, is to have adapted itself most perfectly to the least religious portion of his nature.

Man is an *affectionate* being. His capacity for enjoying society, or appreciating religion, and his happiness in either, depend upon the exercise of his affections. Isolate him, where neither confidence, love, fear, reverence, nor hope, towards God or man, may move within his breast, and his heart becomes cold, unsympathetic, and incapable of experiencing the graces of Christianity; and his life passes on through a cheerless waste, weighed down by a miserable burden. Christianity, therefore, spends her strength in educating the human affections. Her chief application is, not to the mind, but to the heart; and her most perfect development is, not where the intellect most clearly perceives the systematic value of truth, but where the heart is most thoroughly consecrated, in humble, loving sympathy and obedience, to the truth. She strives to

create, not the clear, crisp, frosty air of speculative belief—although by means of it the soul might see more distinctly the proportions of religion—but she throws around the newly living creature the soft, warm, glowing atmosphere of affectionate faith; in which the soul may feel all its liveliest emotions, and holiest impulses, and deepest sympathies, drawn out towards a Being of infinite benevolence. Her first lesson to the infant is a lesson of love. The mother, who for a time is her offspring's only deity, by fostering care elicits the instinct of affection. Her gentle teaching gradually lifts the tender emotions to a higher source of good. She thus substitutes her God for herself in the heart of her child, and educates the instinct into a reverential love for its Heavenly Parent. Throughout life, Christianity is thus engaged in transferring the affections to their nobler objects. She does not interfere with their natural direction, but purifies and spiritualizes it. The confidence of man in men, in its highest exercise, becomes the faith of man in God. The fear and hope which impel man through the strifes of life, become the higher motives of his religious endurance. And the last lesson of Christianity to her aged friend, as he totters on the edge of unsatisfied, and treads upon the verge of satisfying hopes, is, that since his affections have outlasted their earthly objects, and yet have been educated to an undying strength, they must find in an eternal world an everlasting resting-place and reciprocation. And so a lifetime of faith, and fear, and hope, and love, which through earthly shadows has grasped heavenly substance, well introduces the child of God into immortal happiness. If Christianity had ignored the affectionate nature of man, or left it to grovel amidst unworthy objects, she would have failed to answer her high purpose. But having devoted herself to developing the affections, and leading them to their noblest objects, she

has completely adapted herself to this distinguished quality of man.

Man is a *religious* being. Every man must find a God, or make one. He craves some object of reverence, devotion, and trust, beyond his imperfect and impotent self. The Christian religion, therefore, meets this necessity. Need I say how nobly? Whatever Deity a human soul pants for, Christianity exhibits in our God. If it be Reason, He is the highest. If it be Power, He is the mightiest. If it be pure Intellect, He is the unembodied Spirit. If it be Will, His is irresistible. If it be Providence, He is the Sovereign Disposer of all. If it be absolute Benevolence, He is Love. This God Christianity presents in every attractive character, suited to the qualities of our nature. He is incomprehensible, therefore reason may reverence and adore. He is unchangeable, and therefore faith may repose herself at His feet in absolute security. He is sympathizing, and therefore imperfection may confidently approach His ear with her tale of woe. He is affectionate, and therefore the human heart may hopefully ply its arguments learned in the school of earthly emotions. He has once condescended to become incarnate, and therefore even the human body can insure itself of finding a friend in God. The worship and service inculcated by Christianity, in the highest degree, educates and calls into exercise the powers of our nature. Every faculty, sentiment, moral quality, or even bodily habit, is demanded for consecration to Jehovah, and each finds its greatest happiness when devoted to Him. And that which men seek from religion, peacefulness, a quiet conscience, sober enjoyment of life, and a tranquil hope of immortality, all are given by Christianity. If this religion had failed to suit itself to any one attribute of our being, or in the effort had failed to present an adequate idea of God, it would have proved insufficient for its task. To

have presented a perfectly satisfying portion to the soul, is to have adapted itself completely to the religious nature of man.

Man is *mortal*. A brief term of years sums up his earthly history; but it would be inconsistent with the Divine benevolence, to suppose this creature placed in a life however brief, with capacities for rational pleasure, without the means of finding it. Our mortal nature cries out against any view of the Divine plan which renders this world merely an abode of sorrow and disappointment. The Divine system of the present existence is indeed to “make perfect through suffering;” yet He appoints that even grief shall have its solaces, affliction its comfort, and sorrows their antitheses of joy. Amidst all the woes of mortality, there is happiness enough, if only men could find it. The Christian religion, therefore, devotes no small portion of her precepts to teaching how to extract the sweets out of the bitter cups of life,—indeed how to turn even the base metal of earthly unhappiness into the pure gold of true spiritual enjoyment. She instructs us how to deal with misfortune so as to make it a friend; how to find sweet uses even in adversity; how to reap contentment out of a seed-time of trial and grief. But more than this, she teaches us the surest methods of avoiding earthly trouble, by practising honesty, integrity, sobriety, patience, forethought, forbearance, and gentleness; and she affords the highest solace in misfortune, by a self-sustaining consciousness of right. All the pure joys of wisdom, knowledge, and friendship, she accepts. None can appreciate them more highly than she, because of her ever calm, intelligent, and cheerful spirit. And when at last she addresses herself to her departure, it is not, dissatisfied with the portion of good already vouchsafed, but hoping for a more unmingled portion hereafter. If Christianity

had neglected to provide for the present life, if she had not given men a chart of the shoals, and the rocks, and the varying winds of this existence, and taught them how to sail, so as to escape the most stormy seas, and make the least unquiet voyage over the waves of this troublesome world, she would have proved greatly deficient as a guide to those who are to live here through the experiences of three score years and ten. To have provided for the wants of mortality, is to have adapted herself most wisely to the least happy aspect of our human condition.

Man is *immortal*. Every aspiration of our living soul demands it; every conclusion of our reasonable spirit testifies it. Thought cannot die. The power of will, the ability of compelling what is external to administer to a conscious self within, the capacity of affection, the high faculty of discriminating between right and wrong, and that soul, of which all these are functions, cannot die. The seal of immortality is stamped indelibly upon our consciousness. The Christian religion therefore explicitly reveals an eternal life, in terms so pure and elevating, attractive and satisfying, that the human soul, in its least spiritual frame, leaps to attain it. But our soul enjoys a foretaste of happiness in this life, only in connexion with a body; nor have we the least experience of a disembodied condition, nor the least ground in reasoning from experience, to anticipate any perfect bliss without a body. We know nothing, and can imagine nothing concerning a purely spiritual world. Our nature is not formed to live without some communication with material things; but we cannot hold intercourse with external nature apart from the body. And therefore our prognostications of eternal life, based upon experience, all picture an immortal being, compounded of soul and body. The Christian religion gives substance and shape to this natural idea; she reveals a resurrection

and promises immortality to the whole manhood. If she spake only of a spiritual life eternal, our souls might be satisfied, but our humanity could not rest in hope. But since in her representation of everlasting life she combines the hope of resurrection with the prospect of immortality; she adapts herself marvellously to our perception of that eternal life, which human nature demands.

This adaptation of Christianity to mankind is equally striking as respects our *social position*. We are eminently formed for society. Creation was not perfect until a social compact had been completed; nor is it possible to develop our nature in isolation. They are natural laws, not religious, by which men are placed in families, and families formed into tribes and nations. But no religion could be intended for man, or exhibit the hand of his Creator, which did not recognise these relations, and provide for the faithful discharge of the duties arising therefrom. And therefore Christianity sets this social seal as a witness to her truth. She devotes herself to establishing principles, and developing them in precepts belonging to social life. The highest possible sanction is given to the principle by exhibiting it in the eternal existence of God. She teaches that Jehovah never lived in the desolate solitude of One Person, but that, from eternity, God existed as Three Persons in a perfect Unity. And the absolute harmony, the complete oneness, the unutterable bliss of that Divine Trinity is the model and argument for human fellowship. In heaven, as upon earth, solitude is unfit for a living soul. And that is but a caricature of a religion from God, which teaches that a creature, made in His image, can find either purity, perfection, or spiritual happiness in seclusion and separation from his kind. Christianity, modelling her precepts upon what is seen in the perfect social state of heaven, so arranges her instructions that every lesson tends to make

the individual a good member of society. She paints in fair colours the happiness of family life. She blesses the marriage-bond. She takes under her guidance and protection every interest of the household as it arises. For every relation she inculcates specific duties; for every violation she has a penalty, and for every obedience a natural reward. And she at least permits us to anticipate that social affections, matured according to her laws, shall be immortal. With similar solicitude, Christianity has framed precepts and announced their sanctions for every relation, whether of the state, the Christian fellowship, or the general brotherhood of mankind. Every office has her holy sanction; every officer her authority; every performance of duty, whether command or obedience, equally her approval; and every act of kindness, charity, or benevolence, her meed of commendation. So that, if families would live, and governors rule, and citizens obey, by her advice, peace, and good-will, and the utmost happiness of which human society is capable would be the possession, as it is the heritage of man.

If Christianity had failed to see this aptitude of man for social enjoyment, or to appease his craving for society; if she had omitted to give it sanction, or neglected to provide for its right development, she would have proved unequal to her claim, as sent from God. But since she has entirely met the case, even to deriving its holiest possible authority from the eternal communion of Three Divine Persons in one ever blessed Godhead; and even to descending into minute directions for every reciprocal duty, she has shown an adaptation to mankind inexplicable, unless her Author be Jehovah.

We may hasten on towards our conclusion; for the argument is rapidly developing. And we need spend but few

moments in illustrating the familiar facts of the adaptation of Christianity to our present spiritual condition.

Man is a *fallen being*. His present condition, superinduced by sin, is distinguished by depravity. The chief feature of this depravity—at least that one which must be universally recognised—is powerlessness for good. Every one is conscious of a capacity for moral improvement; but equally conscious of such an entire unwillingness to undertake it as amounts to moral inability. The spiritual deficiency of our fallen nature is, therefore, not so much an insufficient religious sense as an insufficient power of following out religious impressions and aspirations. Whose conscious heart does not lament this insufficiency? Now this needed spiritual power, Christianity undertakes to give. By revealing the offices of the Holy Ghost, she exhibits a sufficient source for it. Its supply requires nothing less than a re-creation of the soul; and therefore she attributes it to a Divine agent. Through the influences of this Holy Spirit she entirely eradicates a birth-right depravity, implants new holy dispositions, removes the evil bias of affections, and directs them all towards God. The spiritual nature of a converted man is thus renewed, and his now indwelling and inworking spiritual power is sufficient for all duties. The Holy Ghost continues such a soul in this possession of adequate power, until, by progressive steps, under the discipline of trial, it becomes sanctified and meet for heaven. But depravity necessarily becomes the parent of sin; and therefore, both natural depravity and actual transgression separate man from God. A sinner, either by nature or practice, cannot be complacently or favourably regarded by a perfect Being. Consequently, the relation of fallen man as a sinner to God cries out for a remedy. And every man's conscience whom I address to-night echoes that cry. Need I tell you how Christianity meets this

call? how the mighty energy of Heavenly love has wrought out a sufficient salvation? The atonement of a Divine Person, offered in the nature which had sinned, has been accepted by the Triune Jehovah, as satisfactorily vindicating His justice and truth; and therefore has become the ground of a universal proclamation of mercy. The holy obedience of the same Divine Person in human nature, submitting to the law to which He was in no respect subject, has been accepted by the Triune Jehovah as a satisfactory righteousness, both in essential character and, considering the dignity of the obedient Person, infinitely more valuable than could be rendered by all men, even in their most advanced fallen condition; and therefore it has become the ground of a universal offer of justification. This justification is not the actual rendering a sinner righteous, which could never be, except on the ground of his personal obedience; but it is a gracious act of God, accounting him righteous, or treating him as if he had been righteous, which may reasonably be done, as well for the sake of another as for his own sake. But this proclamation of pardon and justification leaves men wholly to their proper freedom of choice. The believer chooses to avail himself of the mercy. The unbeliever chooses to refuse. After this choice of Christ, which is an act of the highest reason as well as of the humblest faith, the believer enters upon the discharge of all his relations with new and intensely powerful motives, because he is the adopted child of God. The profit of his godliness, in this life, and the consequences of his faithfulness in the next, are all his own. Whilst, on the other hand, the unbeliever, left to his voluntary moral inability, suffers all the practical evils attending irreligion in the present, and anticipates the tremendous weight of misery which must follow persevering sin in an eternal existence.

The only distinguishable note of objection to the harmony of this scheme will not escape the ear of a sceptic, yet we think it a wonderful commentary on the truth of our argument. A fallen man is free to choose, and yet he will not choose aright, unless the Holy Spirit give him power. It is true. The facts are so; on both sides, testified by experience. And therefore Christianity meets them in her remedy. If she had been a human invention, she would have attempted to alter the nature of her man, or the character of her God, so as to have prevented the least appearance of jarring in her scheme. But now Christianity, made by God for man, approaches and deals with man as he is. She finds him a free agent, and she leaves him so. She finds him morally impotent, and she gives him spiritual power. Without attempting to reconcile, she addresses herself simply to the facts of the case; and it is a convincing proof of her Divine original. If now, in any one of these particulars, Christianity had been inadequate, she had not been the offspring of God. But since, by her provided plan of salvation, she has adapted herself equally to all the attributes of God, and to all the spiritual necessities and natural peculiarities of fallen man, it cannot be that her Maker is less than Divine.

This Christianity was not created for a class, or a nation, or a time. She might have been divinely sent, though not adapted for all mankind; but how much more evident is her divinity, when there lives not a human creature on this broad earth for whom she has not a mission of heavenly love, and to whom she does not bring a boon of heavenly enjoyment! She was created for every class. With equal freedom, her steps bend toward either extreme of social position; and although she dwells more constantly with the humble in rank, it is only because of their meekness and lowliness of heart. She scorns the proud, and depresses

all arrogance and presumption, whilst she elevates the truly good to the highest walks of the Divine life. If Socialism is to find a rational type, Christianity must present it; for there is no other system which can produce an actual equality of character amidst necessary inequality of condition, and harmonize the two. All orders of society may be blest alike. All honest professions and business may alike claim her guidance and protection; and in every case she advances the best interests of men.

She was created for every nation. Her language is a universal tongue. Her heart bears universal charity; opening itself with equal warmth to every people. She was created for every time. Her religion never grows antiquated; neither improves by age, nor deteriorates by use; and knows no shadow of change. But amongst all generations, showing the same foundation rock implanted deep as the throne of God, and opening the same safe refuge built by the unchanging hand of God, is the perpetual security and hope of all believers. She was created for every circumstance. Her sympathies flow out with equal readiness to the sorrows or the joys of men; and although she lingers longest within, and oftenest frequents the house of mourning, it is not because unsuited to the merry-hearted, but because most sought and prized by those who most need her consolations. And what is most remarkable, at every time, in every nation, through all conditions of life, a perfect reception of Christianity produces perfect oneness of character. Everywhere the true Christian bears a likeness to Christ Jesus. Nor is it less remarkable that this similarity in type, is consistent with the utmost diversity in natural characteristics. A religion of human origin would demand in its votaries sameness. The religion of God produces unity. A Christian man loses nothing of his individuality, but superadds an identity of God-likeness.

To have attempted the impossible task of so changing human character and constitution, as to make all men look, or think, or speak, or act alike, would have been to falsify the claims of Christianity to a Divine original. To have accomplished the labour of producing essential spiritual unity amidst equally essential natural diversity, is to have adapted itself to the varying characters and circumstances of men, and to have vindicated in the fullest extent its claim to be Divinely created.

Thus, then, the problem is worked out. Here is a world of men, naturally—rational, sensual, affectionate, religious, mortal, and immortal; socially—bound by curiously interlacing ties of family, civil, and general relations; spiritually—fallen and depraved, yet capable of indefinite moral improvement, and consciously destined for present and eternal happiness. And here is a religion, holy, benevolent, consistent with itself, God-like, adapted to every natural peculiarity and providential circumstance, raising the fallen, restoring the lost, and giving temporal and everlasting felicity to every conscientious believer.

The present argument is not, that a religious system so harmonious, beneficent, and pure, could not be the offspring of human wit, but, that no being, except the Maker of man, could so precisely *adapt* a religion to man. The force of the argument lies in the *adaptation*, and increases in power just in proportion as you multiply—and you may multiply indefinitely—the points upon which the agreement must be founded. Whoever was the maker of mankind was the maker of Christianity. Indeed, you can much more easily believe that this human being spontaneously grew out of the elements of a physical world with which he is entirely kindred, than that this creature, having been found by chance, created for himself such a religion out of the elements of a spiritual world, with which he was entirely

uncongenial. It was a Divine work to form dust into this marvellous human body, and to breathe into it a breath of His own eternal life. It was a Divine work to produce unity of being out of complexity of faculties, affections, dispositions, and relations. It was a Divine work to perfect such a being, even in the midst of all the favouring circumstances of a perfect Paradise. But when that being stood outside the gates of Eden, his nature all disordered, the image of God in his soul fractured and destroyed, a fallen, ruined, cursed man, in the midst of a creation cursed, a candidate for earthly sorrow, and an heir of immortal woe; to contrive a religion which, adapting itself entirely to his nature and the disaster, should restore spiritual harmony, revive the likeness to God, renew the heart, forgive the sin, remove the worst features of the curse, and make more than amends by an eternity of bliss; which should reach the case of every man, under all circumstances, in every nation, and in all time; which should produce the same essentially peaceful and holy results in the hearts and lives of all who embrace it; and yet should not force any man out of his sphere, or alter the natural characteristics which give identity to each;—to adapt such a Christianity to lost mankind is no other than the work of God.

If it be a proof of heavenly skill to adapt this human being to the world in which it dwells, much more is it a proof of heavenly skill to adapt a perfectly satisfactory religion to the spiritual nature and the actual condition of such a being in such a world. And if adaptation prove design, and the accomplishment of such a design prove the presence of an infinitely perfect Designer, then is it proved that Christianity is from God.

Extract from Bishop Potter's Address to the Diocese of Pennsylvania, May, 1854.

IN conjunction with the Secretary of the Convention and the President of the Standing Committee, I took measures, last autumn, to procure a course of Sunday evening Lectures on the Evidences of Religion to be delivered in the churches of Philadelphia during the winter months. Bishops and Presbyters were invited from different parts of the country to take part in it; and the Discourses, marked by great, and, in several instances, by pre-eminent ability, were directed more especially to relieve the difficulties of thoughtful young men whose minds, to an extent much to be deplored, are in danger of being infected with a specious but hollow scepticism which shelters itself under the abused names of Science and Philosophy. The result of this experiment has been, to exalt the estimation in which our clergy are held for learning and mental power, and to demonstrate how utterly disproportioned are the arrogant pretensions of speculative unbelief to its actual resources. In a published form these Lectures are likely to prove a permanent and valuable contribution to a branch of Theological Literature which must be revised from time to time, if we would adapt our Apologies for Revealed Religion to the actual, and, in some instances, most urgent, wants of the minds with which we deal. For a Church to decline

considering the plausible objections which, in an age of such prodigious intellectual activity as this, inevitably and continually spring up under the pretended auspices of Physical Science and Metaphysical Philosophy, is tacitly but virtually to confess her incompetence for no small part of her appointed work. No such Church can hope to exert a commanding influence over the culture of our age or land; and its hold even upon the active energies of the people runs the constant hazard of being weakened or destroyed by the suspicion of incapacity. A Church which ceases to teach, and one which does not strive to raise a portion of its teaching to a level with the very highest intelligence around it, is not following in the footsteps of the Apostolic College, nor in those of that early and, in human sense, defenceless church which went in three centuries from the humble spot where all the disciples were "with one accord in one place" to a more than regal sway over the heart of the world. We owe much to the Rev. Dr. Stevens for the enlightened suggestions and the vigilant and laborious supervision which he gave to this enterprise.

THE END.

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